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NEXT ISSUE OUT APRIL 18th

Adventure

MAGAZINE

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CONTENTS

Vol. 125, No. 6

RED RUNS MY BLADE.....F. R. Buckley 12

A novelette dedicated to mammon and manflesh—and the deathless decencies of treachery....

FAMOUS MILITARY CORPS *(Fact)*.....Howard R. Voight 27

The Knights of Saint John.

DEVIL IN THE SKY.....John Prescott 28

A priceless boon it was for a boy to give—a bullet from the heart!

THE JAWBONE OF SHAMUS MACROOM.....William Chamberlain 36

Said Sergint Macroom, "'Tis me belief that the jawbones of an ass are scarce commodities in Samar. I had to do the best that I could with the tools which I had to the hand of me...."

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BIG DARK.....W. L. Heath 58

Life was a fight to Tom Standard—death merely a final prey!

SOUTH OF SUDDEN DEATH.....Albert Richard Wetjen 64

Dead reckoning hadn't meant much to the young second mate—till he had to die by it!

BLOOD FOR THE HAWK.....Gordon MacCreagh 74

They lived fast, the hell-begotten crew of Captain Lucifer—for they knew they wouldn't live long!

AN INCIDENT OF MASSACRE.....Paul Arthur Lundgren 92

"Want to know how the Apache fights? He fights like—like the whole damned desert!"

THE CAMP-FIRE.....Where readers, writers and adventurers meet 6

ASK ADVENTURE.....Information you can't get elsewhere 101

ASK ADVENTURE EXPERTS.....The men who furnish it 107

LOST TRAILS.....Where old paths cross 112

Cover painted for Adventure by Monroe Eisenberg

Ejler G. Jakobsson, Editor

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THE CAMP-FIRE

IT HAS been said that we live in an age of fallen heroes, of crumbling ideals and stumbling idols. We're not sure we agree. The figures prominent in our public and sports life who are tumbling aren't going down with a loud enough crash to prove to us that they ever were heroes—the sound that should have been thunder comes out a whimper. And it's well to remember that there is a virtue in strength itself—strength that is without connivance.

In what we feel may be his greatest story to date—*Red Runs My Blade,* which heads off this issue of *Adventure*—R. F. Buckley bends his unique talent to an exposure of the men who make wars and crumble nations that is as true today as it was at the time and place where the incidents described had their setting. Through a simple substitution you may—as did we—view your world through Mr. Buckley's eyes—and we'd like to promise you more than one surprise.

But that would be for you to decide. In the meantime, here's what Mr. Buckley has to say by way of introduction to his latest brainchild:

> I am always mildly surprised when readers—not so large a percentage of them as formerly, however—expect to find virtue triumphant in a Caradosso story.
>
> Nowadays, as the movies are officially compelled to prove to us, virtue does triumph; but in 16th century Italy this was not

(Continued on page 8)

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(Continued from page 6)

so, at least in our understanding of the word. Curiously enough, the contemporary Italian expression for what did triumph was *virtu*, but it denoted an ability to gain one's ends by whatever means, including gouging in the clinches. The man whose "strength was as the strength of ten" because his heart was pure might get away with goodness in our modern sense of the word; though even he was likely to find his plans disrupted by an impure-hearted individual who would creep up and stab him in the back.

Of course there were exceptions to the general rule—for instance, the saints. But even in the Church we behold the highly virtuous Savonarola done to death at the behest of most unvirtuous Alexander VI—while Alexander's son, the notorious Cesare Borgia, drove from his duchy the gentle, virtuous and scholarly Duke of Urbino. About the only way in which a conspicuous person could practice the Christian virtues was, in fact, by the unchristian practice of surrounding himself with more armed force (and secret assassins) than were possessed by the opposition party; which for obvious reasons rarely came to pass.

In the specific case of this story, I quite agree the events described constitute a monument to injustice, and that the ending, in equity, should be quite other than it is. However, I don't apologize for painting the Cinquecento in its true colors. If Caradosso's narrative seems to support the modern Army saying that there ain't no justice, it should comfort some people to realize that there wasn't any four hundred years ago either; whereas those who believe that nowadays the movies have the right of it can rejoice at the extent of our advance from the old bad times.

Actually, both for the sake of clarity and to spare folks' feelings, I have made Duke Pietro much more judicial and deliberate than (on the example of his real-life peers) he would actually have been. In cases believed to be of urgent danger, evidence against the accused was then about as much at a discount as *habeas corpus* or trial by jury.

Which reminds me that while I was playing soldier—good heavens, it's so many years ago already—I met a young man in another service, who kidded me gently about a small misdemeanor I happened not to have committed. I told him so, and he accepted my assurance but said "it looked mighty like it—" to which I agreed. He then remarked gently that he had known people killed—in peacetime it might have been called murdered—on the strength of appearance far less convincing.

"It's too bad," he admitted, "but what the hell—you've no time to make certain and you can't afford to take a chance."

He really was a nice young man. It was hard to believe that in the line of duty he could be as deadly as a turpentined rattlesnake. I was thinking of him when I put Cerchio Rinaldi into the story; but I had been rather unsold on the harmlessness of nice-looking young gentlemen some time before the war. As I may have stated previously, I was on a jury and saw a procession of obvious mothers' boys, Sunday School superintendents and necktie salesmen give evidence in a case of armed robbery. All the witnesses alluded to the prisoners as "Mister X" and "Mister Y," and it was almost impossible to believe that such gentlemanly fellows were F. B. I. men, who had been in the midst of and all around the criminals while their crime was in hand, and who had even taken movies of Messers X and Y committing it! And I have no doubt that had the gentlemen in custody objected to being taken into custody, the gentlemen who wished to take them into custody would quite cheerfully have blown their heads off.

With regard to the mercenary soldiers who figure in this yarn—I expressed some views on them in a recent *Campfire*, and have recently been reading the remarks of soldiers and others who were acquainted with them. It is amusing to note that while the Italian soldiers, particularly, protest that this hiring of foreigners will deprive Italians of military merit and make them unfit to fight "even the English"—their main preoccupation is that fighting work is being farmed out to foreign labor, to the disadvantage of native talent. Even Caradosso, it will be noted, seems to have some vague resentment of unfair competition. As well he might, being a member of the Guild of Captains, which of course was a sort of trades union, formed for the purpose of preventing trades unionism among the men.

Life was like that in those days. Complicated and dangerous. Sometimes, despite our great advances in aeronautics for instance, and atomic fission, I don't think it's much simpler or safer today.

FROM an esteemed contributor, critic and colleague the following final brick on *l'affaire* Chivington—you will remember George C. Appell's article, *Hell on Horseback* in our September issue. Mr. Appell's stand on Chivington caused a bit of fur to fly, and Philip H. Godsell, arctic traveler, explorer and author, writes us:

Like your other readers I was interested in the correspondence regarding Buffalo Bill and Yellow Hand and Tall Bear, as I met Buffalo Bill when he was touring England in 1906. As for the Sand Creek affair, I think your last contributor on the subject was correct in stating that the Sand Creek affair, was just one of many incidents in the succession of Western Indian troubles from the days of the Civil War up to the killing of Sitting Bull by Indian Police

(Continued on page 10)

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4-52

(Continued from page 8)

at Grand River following—or rather during —the Ghost Dance troubles. For your original writer to attribute all subsequent troubles to the Sand Creek affair was putting things considerably out of focus. Until the military obtained the supremacy over the Sioux, Cheyennes, Arapahoes and other western tribes a series of engagements and border troubles was inevitable. Of Chivington himself, the less said the better.

JOHN PRESCOTT'S unusual story, *Devil in the Sky*, in this issue gave us some pause before we bought it. We liked the story—loved it, in fact—but it did make us ask: just what is adventure? Readers' reactions, after you've finished the Prescott piece, would be more than welcome —our idea is that adventure consists of the unexpected, may come to a man at any age, and must hit him deeply enough to prove his mettle for all his days to come.

We believe *Devil in the Sky* lives up to all the above requirements—besides leaving an unforgettable imprint on the reader as well.

Mr. Prescott lives currently in Arizona. He is a veteran Great Lakes sailor, speedboat racer and winter sportsman—and lately distinguished himself as an explorer by discovering archeological traces of a canyon-dweller civilization older than that of the redskins in his adopted state.

His literary efforts have found their way into some of the top publications in the land.

We hope to get many more.

RESPONSE to the revival of *Adventure's* Identification Service continues to be gratifying, in that it reflects the vital and often necessary function this department has served in the past. We're doing a brisk, though gratuitous business in reactivating the identification cards of veteran *Adventurers*—many of whom are still toying with the bright flame of danger.

A representative letter is the following, from George A. Karl, of Los Angeles (for what has gone on before regarding this project, we refer you to the November '51 and March '52 issues of this magazine):

Attached is my card No. 5791, an early issue which I have carried all over the world and find as Mr. Webster did that they were discontinued years ago.

If you are going to resume this service I would like to renew same as I am starting a new adventure with my 54 ft. twin diesel power cruiser EL-SEA, 2500 mile cruising range.

ANENT *Blood for the Hawk*, Gordon MacCreagh writes:

The end of the 17th and beginning of 18th century was the heyday period of the pure story-book "pirates", as opposed to the earlier buccanners and later privateers.

In 1704 one Master David Harrowe, a young blacksmith and sword maker, was commissioned to "measure and fit for hys iron caige" Captain James Quelch, who was to be hanged in public with seven of his "crewe" at Broughton's Old Wharf in Boston. Quelch, as "the bloodye captaine" was to have the honor of perpetuating the spectacle by being suspended in this cage from a gibbet on Bird Island off of Scarlitt's Wharf—This form of salutory warning to malefactors was accorded also to Capt. Kidd.

Cotton Mather issued one of his blasts against the "Sin of Piracy" and called voluminously upon "The Sovereign Grace" to "obliterate this haunt of Sin that is Port Royal the capital of this infamous breed". Amongst his oratory were supplications to "destroy it by fire or sink it beneath the floods".

Since piracy, however, could flourish only so long as there existed a good market for the loot, and since rich merchants, in England as well as in Boston and the Carolinas, furnished the underground market, the Sovereign Grace remained dilatory about the good preacher's call for fire and brimstone until 1712, when a "warning hurricane" hit Port Royal. The godless pirate colony remained hard-boiled about it and rebuilt its battered shacks. Another hurricane just about razed the town in 1714. Pirates and big business, however, remained undaunted. Whereupon, ascribed to another Mather Sermon, was thundered the quotation from Proverbs. *"He that being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall be utterly destroyed."*

It was to this Port Royal that young Master David Harrowe, the "Harlan" of my story, was sent under indenture to one of the rich merchants for "grievous assault" upon an unnamed "member of the gentry".

PAUL LUNDGREN is another newcomer. After a few hozannas on the subject of the editors of *Adventure* agreeing with his own literary tastes—Mr. Lundgren's favorite author is Mr. Lundgren, who wrote *An Incident of Massacre* for this issue—he gets down to brass tacks.

(Continued on page 113)

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But what people didn't know was that father and son hated—detested—one another.

For a time the animosity between father and son, though nearly overpowering, was kept under control. But when the older man brought young, spirited Helen into their home, the house could not contain the passions her arrival aroused, and father and son became locked in deadly combat.

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INHERIT THE NIGHT by Robert Christie
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The villagers had heard of San Cobar. The old legends said that it was a place of great wealth. But it lay beyond the mountains from which no man had returned alive. True, El Borracho, the drunken trader, had returned from his mysterious wanderings with rich ornaments, but he was now far gone in drink.

The stranger showed El Borracho more gold than he had ever seen, enough to make him forget the terrible mountain gales, the yawning crevasses.

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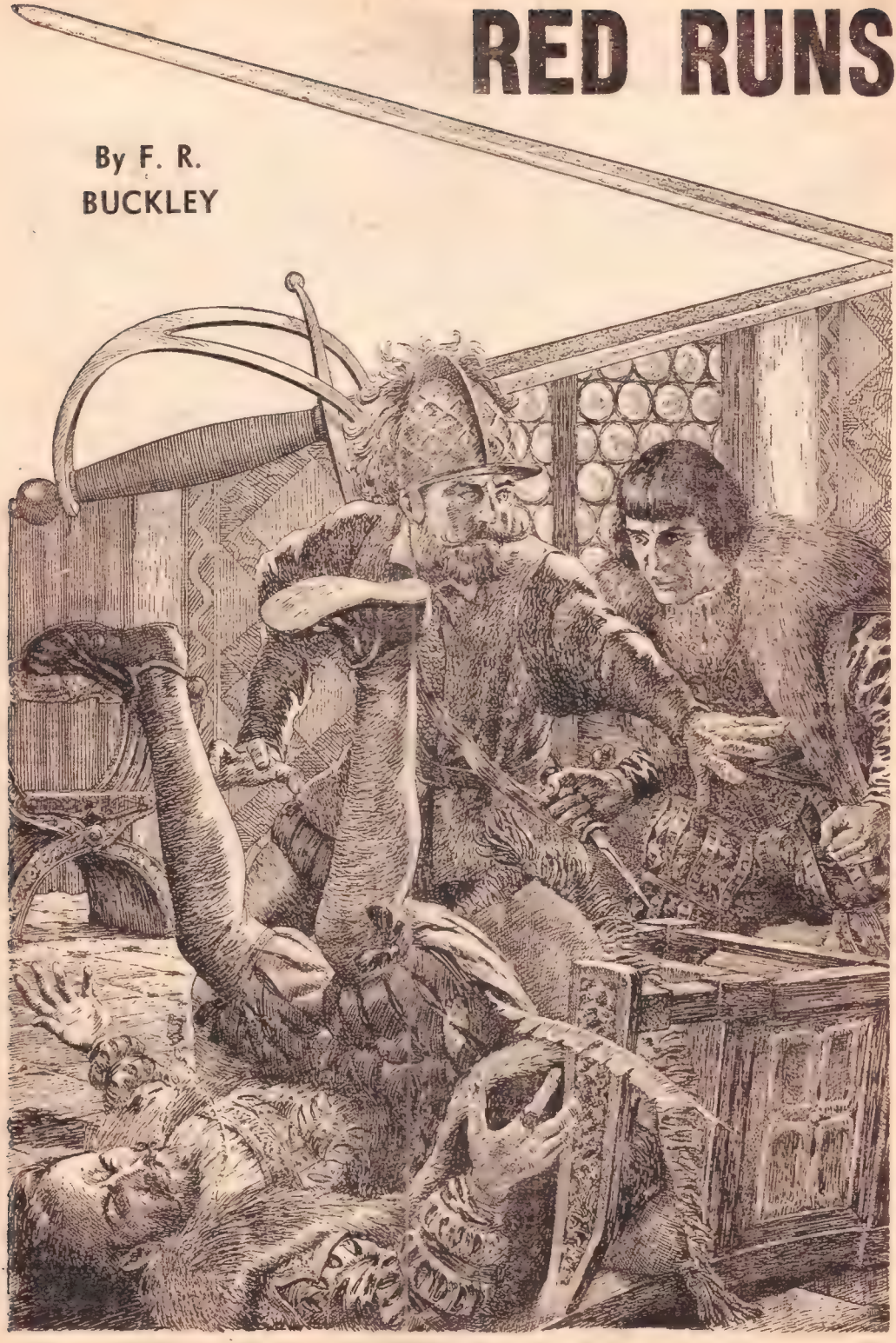
RED RUNS

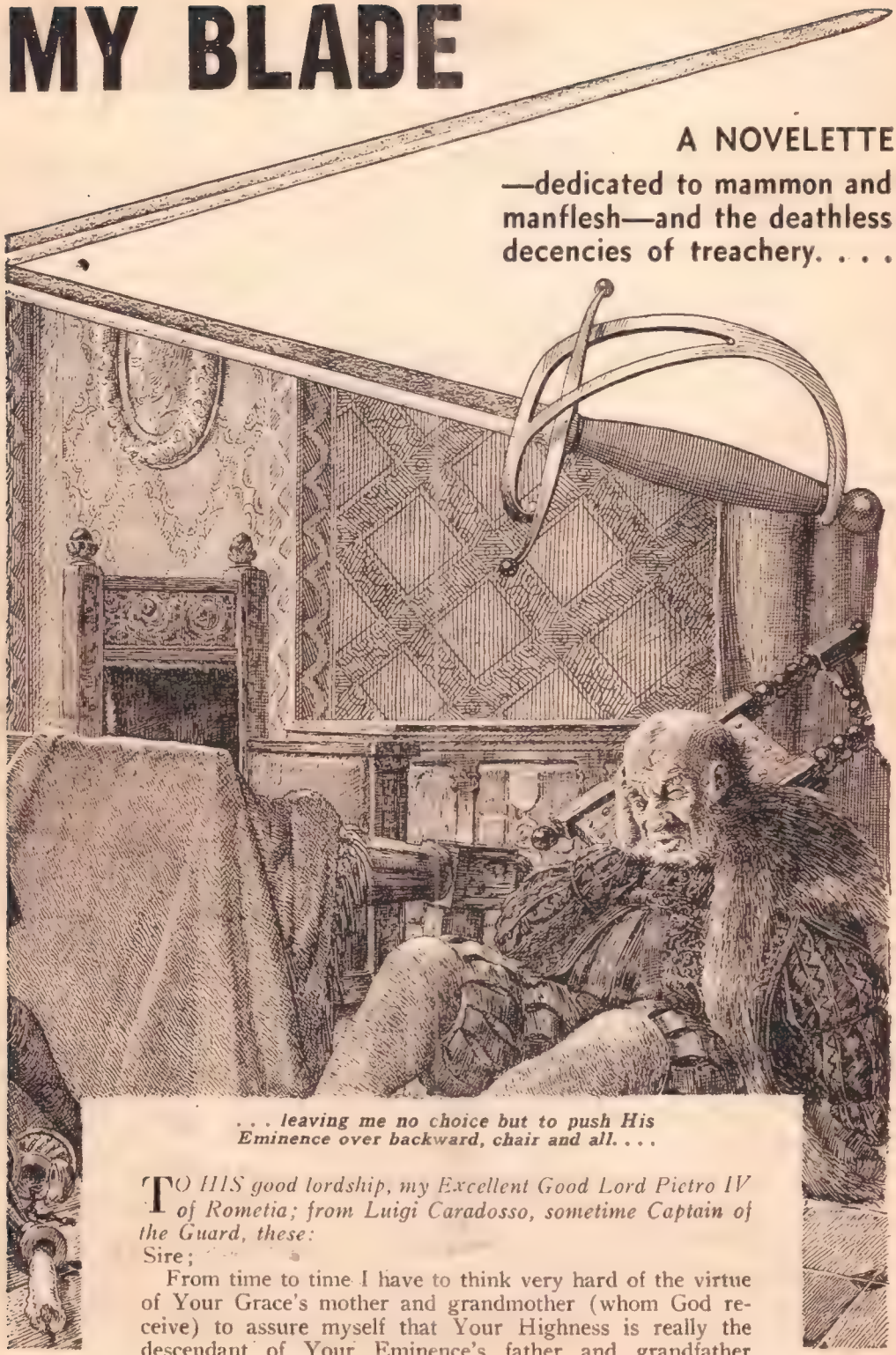
By F. R.
BUCKLEY



MY BLADE

A NOVELETTE

—dedicated to mammon and manflesh—and the deathless decencies of treachery. . . .



. . . leaving me no choice but to push His Eminence over backward, chair and all. . . .

TO HIS good lordship, my Excellent Good Lord Pietro IV of Rometia; from Luigi Caradosso, sometime Captain of the Guard, these:

Sire;

From time to time I have to think very hard of the virtue of Your Grace's mother and grandmother (whom God receive) to assure myself that Your Highness is really the descendant of Your Eminence's father and grandfather

(whom God also receive, but more carefully).

One of these occasions is now upon me, following yesterday's letter from Your Highness, brought to this cottage of my retirement by Cerchio Rinaldi. Before proceeding to more serious matters, I would here say that if this oaf, who used to be one of our armor-boys, returned to Rometia naked, it was no fault of mine. Appearing before me with his hat on, he announced that he was one of Your Grace's bravos, and that he had been sent because theretofore I (in my eightieth year!) had maltreated less formidable messengers

Well, sire, rather amused than annoyed by this slander and by the boy's claim to be a qualified assassin, I asked him his age, which he said was thirty-five years; and then jestingly inquired where he wore his stiletto—whether in his boot, I meant, or up one sleeve or the other, or in his bosom or waistband or down the back of his neck. Each of these methods hath been advocated by good men of my acquaintance in the past; I wondered merely which had best stood the test of time. And when this Rinaldi refused information, of course I took his sword from him and essayed to see for myself

Many a time, when I was younger, I have romped more roughly with my own children; but of course this Rinaldi's bones were more brittle than theirs, and then again he was clothed in black velvet, and very proud of it, and so, when his doublet tore, crack went his head against a doorpost. I tied him across his saddle very carefully, head down so that the motion of the horse might shake some sense into it; and trust he reached Your Excellency in good condition. His two little pistolets (noisy tools for a bravo), his mail undercoat, his warrant and the ring with the poison in it (ah, the brave old days!) I am keeping until Your Grace shall send for them

Ah, sire, I was about to suggest the sending of a corporal's guard, whose members would know better than to insult their old captain—when mine eye fell anew on this letter from Your Grace, proposing the abolition of the Guard, corporals and all!

I am striving to be calm, Your Highness, because Your Lordship's letter asks a question to which I would reply respectfully; in the manner I have always held toward Your Grace's family during my sixty years of service.

Regardless of the Florentine menace to Rometia, which seems to me to grow daily more acute, Your Lordship proposes to disband the Guard, all but a ceremonial handful; and, on the advice of a Venetian banker (who will lend Your Eminence the money) to hire foreigners should troops be required.

The question is whether I, the occasion arising, would emerge from my retirement to control these ruffians—the words "command" and "troops", inadvertently used by Your Grace, not here applying.

And the answer (kissing Your Serenity's hands) is, "No" It is true that I have ere now solicited a return to duty with the Guard, and true that the said Guard under my command was known as a battalion of devils; but hired foreigners are not the Guard, and between devils and fiends there is a great gulf, my lord. Let their own officers hawk and gurgle at them and take on their souls the load of their excesses, and God help the Duchy of Rometia.

That it should come to this—and in my lifetime who remember the first setting of foot, by foreign mercenaries, on the soil of Italy!

UNQUESTIONABLY I have lived too long; but while I linger I will strive to serve Your Grace with the pen if I may not with the sword.

Stating therefore that the said setting of foot took place in the reign of Your Lordship's father, and that there was behind it a banker—a fat-faced fellow from Munich or Zurich or some such throat-clearing town; whom I found, much at ease, in His Grace's cabinet one night when I entered to report.

"And who is this tall fellow?" asks Mammon, leering at me over his fur collar.

"Captain of the Guard," says my lord, shortly. "Hath been away. On a mission."

The last two sentences he spake reluctantly, as if the words were being forced out of him, which was very strange. But stranger still was the fact that when this banker looked at me, I myself felt as though I were being squeezed.

"Ah," says the fat rogue through his forefinger. "Would that be the mission to Agni, captain?"

I was so taken aback that he knew of the affair, that before thinking I assented; said nothing, of course (his lordship not yet having addressed himself to me)—but saluted.

"How many killed and wounded?" asks the banker, but this time I was wary of him.

I made no move, but stood looking at His Grace.

"Well?" says he.

"Sire, we lost fourteen horses, and of men, twelve killed and twenty-seven wounded. But the enemy—"

"And a gun burst also, *nicht wahr?*" asks the banker, freezing my utterance. For this had happened only the day before, and thirty leagues distant, and I had intended to inform his lordship of the accident as it were by degrees. Yet here was this fat slug. . . .

"Well?" snaps Pietro.

"A gun did burst, my lord," says I, "to some extent."

The banker threw himself back in his chair.

"There you are," says he, spreading his hands. "Two hundred florins for the gun; fourteen horses at fifty is another seven hundred—"

My lord raised his hand. I had known that his circumstances were straitened (the Duchy was at that time only half-built); it was visible that this banker had been urging economy or some other invention of the devil, and that he had now gained his point. For the moment I feared he might have been urging reduction of the Guard, as envisaged by Your Grace at this later date; but thank God Your Highness' father proved still to be in possession of his wits.

"And what have you gained?" pursues this banker. "A stinking village, not worth the expenditure, and on which you must spend still more money, for defence, when my lord of Casatico moves to retake it."

"Aye, aye," says my lord impatiently.

This Signor Klotz (what a name for one of God's children!) spread his hands again, smiling.

"Well?" demands my lord; and now the banker looked sidewise at me and becked with his head, meaning that he would discuss matters not intended for my ear.

And my lord obeyed him!

"Come back in an hour for your orders, Luigi," says he. "Dismissed!"

When I returned, I was perspiring slightly and also bleeding a little, though of course not visibly—which breaches of discipline I will now respectfully explain to Your Grace.

Filled with zeal, I had wished to report on the Agni campaign at the earliest moment, wherefore I had come straight to the Presence, pausing merely to wash at the house of a wife I had in the Via Ducale.

Now, with a full hour at my disposal, I wished of course to change my shirt (I had worn it only three weeks, but have always been a stickler for cleanliness on parade) and otherwise to prepare myself for formal attendance on His Grace.

Judge of my dismay when I found, in my quarters, the wine skin half empty and the basin half full of dirty water! Firing my pistolet out of the window to summon my servant, I inquired of him straitly how such things might be.

"Why, C-Captain," says he, going down on his knees for some reason. "G-God is my witness that I left all in order. No longer ago than half an hour, C-Captain."

"And some demon hath been in here," says I, "to wash his hell-smoked visage in my ewer, and dry his brimstone hands on my napkins, and slake his infernal thirst—"

"N-no, sir," says the wretch. "I th-think it m-mu-must have been the other c-captain, Captain."

Believing him mad, I abandoned severity and raised him carefully by the hair.

"Bethink you," says I. "There is but one captain hereabouts. Dost not remember me, Varchi, who broke thy jaw for thee only last Pentecost?"

"Indeed, indeed, sir," says he, trying to salute, "But I mean the foreign gentleman."

Evidently he could not mean the banker. This must be some other alien. Two in one day! It seemed as though Italy were being overrun.

"The captain who came with my lord of Treni," gasps my servant. "O, sir—"

"The Count of Treni here?" I asked, more amiably, for I liked that young man. Everybody did. He was one of those rare youths who (like Your Lordship's family,

of course) almost convince one that the nobility is not altogether rotten.

"But the Count of Treni's captain is no foreigner," says I, he being in fact a friend of mine from *condottiero* days.

"I meant only," squeaks my man, as my grip on his hair tightened somewhat, "that this German gentleman came at the same time as my lord—and the other German gentleman—they all three came together, sir, and—"

At which point, very conveniently, who should walk into the room as though he owned it, but a person obviously (from his blue eyes and defiant manner) from the other side of the Alps. Having in former days consorted, outside Italy, with his likes, of course I knew him for an officer of free-lances or mercenaries; and O how grateful was I to have been civilized and gentled, since, by noble service! This fellow was little better than a brute beast—laid hand to his sword the moment he saw me.

"Good morrow, sirrah," says I, dropping my servant (who crawled away) and feeling whether my own hilt were where I could wish it.

He said something in return, but his thick accent made it impossible to tell whether he was saying, "Good morrow," (as he should) or making some slighting reference to my mother. Never having known my mother, who in fact left me on a monastery doorstep in a basket, I am in no case to make slighting remarks about her myself, so that manifestly it is unthinkable that I should accord that privilege to strangers.

Nevertheless I did not entirely draw my sword, merely freed some couple of hands-breadths of it from the loops while explaining to this foreigner that parentage is at best uncertain—witness the fact that his own father was probably unknown. I then asked him, as one gentleman another, whether 'twas he who had guzzled my wine and swilled his hog's hide in my basin—and as God is my judge, Your Grace, the next moment he had drawn blade and started forward as though to take my life!

Indeed, had I not chanced to twitch my own sword free as I spoke, and to have had my hand on the back of a chair which I now threw under his feet, that moment might have seen the end of me—a man with four wives and God knows how many children, and all the best of my career before me!

However, partly out of compassion and partly because he was too close to me, I did not run the fellow through, but instead drove my hilt against his nose-bridge and kicked him in the belly so that he might stand upright and fight like a man. I think I have made it evident, Your Grace, that he was bent on fighting, and since I was in my own quarters and he a visitor, sure it is plain that hospitality compelled me to oblige him?

Very well, then.

Kicking him (in my haste I had o'erlooked the fact that he was wearing half-armor) I had severely hurt my toes—broken two or three of them, the leech said later—whereby it came about that I could do little more than defend myself, while this outland rascal hopped like a flea in the spring.

It shames me still to admit that he pinked me half-a-dozen times for the once I cut his nose off, but as I say I was crippled and besides the truth is mighty and will prevail.

Round and round the room we went, I lumbering on my poor sore foot, but not complaining beyond an occasional grunt (I have always found grunting to help me get the greatest force into a lunge)—and this cowherd (or it may have been swine he had tended in his youth, I did not know)—shouting and screaming and overturning the furniture and after all failing to get his point into me any farther than an inch at a time.

For myself, I despise such pecking and fluttering—pin a man or leave him alone hath been my motto. So, save for the loss of his nose aforesaid, mine adversary went unwounded almost to the end of the fight, when he stepped in too close and I took off one ear and the point of his chin.

He had, after the fashion of northerners, no beard; and when I had thus deprived him of the chance of growing one, he rushed forward, shortening his sword as he came, and enviously seized me by mine. Well, Your Grace, no man likes to be thus mauled; and then again his ulterior motive was to stab me; and the bell had just warned that I had but a quarter-hour before I must see the Duke; and since I had a dagger, as usual, up my left sleeve. . . .

MY SERVANT stripped me naked and threw buckets of cold water on me until my wounds dried up—they were but flesh deep, but I thought it best to wear leather lest they start bleeding again—and I put on parade armor and tight boots so that I should not limp, and on the stroke of the hour behold me again saluting His Highness, as fresh as a wood-violet (my favorite flower).

The usurer was not there, but seemed to have left something of his manner behind him, in charge of my lord.

Not a word about Agni. No banter about my wives.

Instead: "Caradosso!"

"Sire!"

"Ye know my lord of-Treni?"

"Yes, sire."

"He's here. He wishes to capture Monterosso. Can he do it?"

This was an ugly question to answer standing up and without a pot of wine to choke on while one reflected. By rights, the lands of Monterosso belonged to this young Treni; they had been filched from his father by my lord of Casatico—the same from whom we had just forced Agni. Complicating my lord of Treni's right to these lands, however, was my own lord Pietro's desire for them; so far not put into action for fear he might have to fight Treni and Casatico at the same time.

"If Your Grace permitted—" says I carefully.

"Suppose I do permit. Can Treni take those lands?"

"Not so easily as we could, Your Grace."

He banged the table with his hand.

"Yes or no?"

"It would be close, Your Highness. With such losses as Treni must sustain, his gross force at the moment being so much less than ours, 'tis doubtful whether he could hold the lands once he had won them."

"I am not consulting thee on politics, captain. I ask thee plainly—since we have weakened Casatico at Agni, can my lord of Treni—with some little help—succeed in seizing Monterosso?"

"With some little help, sire, yes," says I, wondering whence this help might come. "I think he can."

Whereat, believe me or not, Your Grace, the door of the cabinet was flung open (despite the sentry, whom I later disciplined) and in comes that Zurich banker, wailing and lamenting in such fashion that I thought he must have lost a groat through some hole in his pocket.

But no—nothing so reasonable. The cause of his woe (expressed in the vilest Italian ever I laid ear to)—and of his bursting into His Grace's cabinet thus (which should have got him stabbed)—was that I had carved gobbets off his captain and finished by murdering the man!

I have told Your Highness what had really happened, but there was no means of explaining matters sensibly to this banker. No—for all my urgings that a man so chopped up (by his own imprudence) was better dead, he would not be comforted. For where, he moaned, could he find a captain of equal ability who, having murdered his mother as this one had, could be got equally cheap? To be plain and in order with Your Highness, this banker was a peddler of mercenaries, of which he owned a couple of troops for hire to the highest bidder. Most of his men were criminals, like their late commander—willing to eat garbage and carry cheap swords for this flesh-monger, rather than stretch rope for whatever noble really had rule over them. I was not aware of these facts at the time, hirelings having been theretofore unknown in our wars, but I learned them—as Your Grace, God forbid, now seems intent on learning them in his turn.

Well. . .

I looked at my lord Pietro, expecting to find him shocked by such sordidness. But lo! Instead, he was staring at me with a gaze from which (though it was not furious) I boded no good. And what with my young lord of Treni coming in and eyeing me as he might have eyed a slayer; and this old Klotz a-moaning on the couch (though my lord had not invited him to sit down)—it was a relief when His Grace said through his teeth, "Under arrest, Caradosso. I'll see thee later. Dismissed!"

I will not leave Your Grace apprehensive lest Your Excellency's father should have dealt with me harshly for my small jape; and will at once say that when he recalled me (toward midnight, he being then alone after a long conference with the banker and

young Treni) he was as calm as Satan.

"In view of what has happened," says he, adding some words about assassination, bloody-mindedness, gallows and what not, but smiling as he spoke, "evidently 'tis impossible that thou remain in my service, Luigi. Thou or any of the similar blackguards in the Red Troop."

The Red Troop, which may have numbered forty men, was made up of oldsters from the Free Bands—I had known them aforetime. They rode behind me at the head of the column on campaign, and were called red because that is how they came out of action. Usually I kept them in reserve, to launch as shock troops at a proper moment, and thus launched, under a mere sergeant, I have seen the two score of them smash a charge of five hundred. Of course they had had nothing to do with the death of Klotz' captain.

So I saluted, my lord regarding me with narrowed eyes.

"I suppose," says he, "that ye'll become little better than bandits, little better than those rogues I was to have hired from Klotz—but now they have no captain—to help poor young Treni take Monterosso."

I listened carefully. There was always much meat in Your Grace's father's discourses, provided one disregarded most of the words therein.

"Later," says Pietro, playing with a pen and seeming to address its feather, "provided he succeed in this first campaign, my lord Paolo will have wherewithal to hire auxiliaries. Obviously I cannot lend him troops, because my good-heartedness might be misunderstood in the Council of Nobles. But I was about to guarantee his credit with this creature Klotz, ill though I can afford—"

He appeared to wake from his reverie and stared at me very piercing. I saluted.

"But that's no business of thine, thou discharged ruffian," says he. "Look you—most of ye served my father faithfully before ye sold your souls to the devil, so as an act of grace ye may keep your arms and horses."

I saluted again.

"In return, I hope," says His Grace, who at will could sound exactly like a parish priest, "that if ever ye can serve me, ye will not forget my compassion, though never again in my employ, ye wicked men."

"Your Highness may be assured of it," says I, causing my voice to tremble slightly (in case the banker was listening) and wondering what the devil, exactly, his lordship had up his sleeve. Whatever it was, any benefits to young Treni would bear to it the same relation as did the lace ruffles to his lordship's arm.

"Dismissed, then," says Pietro sadly, winking at me.

And so we left the castle, drums beating once every ten paces, black bands around our left arms, the faces proper to mourners at our own funerals—and our bellies full of wine and quaking with laughter.

CHAPTER 2

FOR all that, I was not entirely easy in my mind, not knowing (as I have said) his lordship's dispositions, and so being unsure whether or no they might chance to land me and my men in the abyss. Which causes me to think again—how refreshing it is nowadays to see Your Highness' self, open as the day, trusting even his enemies to give him time to hire Switzers, and meantime employing no bravos more competent than this Cerchio Rinaldi! Indeed, I am sorry I stripped the young man, and if Your Highness will send him to me again I will atone by showing him some baby-tricks with a poniard and a piece of rope, which should profit him if ever he is called upon to practice his profession. Now I bethink me, it was rumored (while he was our armor-boy) that he was my son—I never believed it, but perhaps after all I may owe him some fatherly counsel.

Where was I?

Ah—the Red Troop in disgrace.

Well, of course it was not long before a messenger came to us. Not from his Highness, no, no—from the skies probably, with a bag of celestial gold and the suggestion that very little might turn the tide of battle (then impending) between my lords of Treni and Casatico.

"And will my lord of Treni," I asked, "pension any widows who may be left by such interference?"

"Ai, ai!" says the messenger, horrified. "Who spoke of armed interference? Sometimes the sight of a troop, posted on a hill and perhaps backed—who should know—

by more troops still, will take the fire out of a charge. At least, so the Duke—so I was told by someone who should know."

"M'm," says I. "And if it doth not?"

"Who will not learn from precept must suffer experience," says the messenger, and so, saluting me with the wrong hand (he was a lawyer) withdrew for that time.

Wherefore, a week later, I stationed my force on a hillside to the north of Campo di Monterosso—a long flat stretch of meadow whereon the Casatico force must halt the Treni men if they were to be stopped at all; and just as the Casatico captain raised his baton for the charge, I trotted to the regulation distance in front of my troopers and shouted very loud, whereat they couched their lances.

Actually, we did not advance, but undoubtedly it looked as though we might at any moment, and nothing will make charging cavalry more uncomfortable—I speak from experience—than the feeling that a bolt of horse may crash into their flank.

So the Casatico men, looking toward us rather than straight ahead at their lanceheads, started in a ragged line and gathered speed more slowly than was advisable.

Whereas the Treni men, with their lord in the van, had no such fears, possibly because I had taken position where they could not see us. They launched themselves in good order, kept formation and gathered speed so quickly that at the moment of shock they were going twice as fast as the Casaticans, with a result I need not further elaborate.

I shall never forget, though, the cloud of dust that arose from that collison. I have seen a many, but never one like that. Some effect of the sunshine on the powder-smoke, I suppose, but it looked as though lovely angels were hovering over the field. Not so many angels as there were killed in that battle (about six hundred) or I might have thought I had the second sight. But still, angels. Very charming.

Well, when I looked down from them, it was evident that save for the fool heroes who in every battle will stay behind to have their throats cut, the Casatico men were in full retreat. So I gave the order to dismount and make soup, and myself cantered down to the field in case anyone might have dropped anything of value.

All I found, though, except for the dead and wounded, was my young lord of Treni, trotting about with his face aglow and succoring the fallen with the greatest magnanimity.

To my amaze, his face darkened at sight of me, and he spoke words which (but for his obvious ignorance) would have distressed me.

"Thou, Caradosso?" says he quite harshly "Well—there's no loot for thy bloody brigands hereabout. Be off!"

AS IT was, this reception saddened me solely on account of his poor young lordship.

Theretofore I had assumed that, while other nobles would pretend (as etiquette demanded) to believe I had left the service of Rometia, he whom I was helping by my masquerade of exile would be free of that delusion. It was possible, of course, that the young man was acting a part, but I did not think so since he was a singularly open, honest, unaffected, innocent, confiding lad—rather (if I may presume to compare a mere count with a duke)—like Your Grace.

Naturally moreover, my belief had been that in lending me and my troop thus unofficially to Paolo, my lord had been establishing a claim to some part of the lands di Treni might conquer. But in that case, and especially in view of the fact that we had done no fighting, 'twould be vital for Pietro to dazzle the boy with the value of our assistance.

If (I reflected as I rode from the field) he had left the young man ignorant, allowing him to believe I was in fact a brigand, and that he, poor youth, was victor of Monterosso all by himself—well, that meant a deeper scheme than I had envisaged. And without knowing what its latter end might be I was, as I have said, very sorry for its victim.

It was only to be expected that something sinful should be afoot. Your Grace's father was popularly known as Pietro the Devil, inheriting the title from his own father; and during his own four years on the throne had done his best to deserve the honor.

But now he had been in consultation with a banker, ah-ah!

And the two of them (that evening after

I had killed the banker's captain) in cabal with young Treni, ah-ah-ah!

But why (I concluded my meditations) should I break my skull with thought of this young noble when Italy was full of my own children in need of fatherly care and (owing to the exigencies of military service) not getting it?

WE TOOK up quarters in a village on the Casatico border, lending the inhabitants our tents so that they could camp in the fields without discomfort, and awaited next orders from His Highness. I chose the Casatico border because, since His Grace was presenting us to the world as bandits, I felt in duty bound to sustain the character. And naturally I could not connive at brigandage in Rometia.

And this devotion to duty turned out profitably in more ways than one. First, of course, there was the loot—of which, having a mind above such things, I distributed a full quarter among my men—more important was the practice we gained in dealing with convoys. Merchants benighted on the roads had in those days an uncomfortable habit of bivouacking in a square made of carts, litters and pack-animals, which, defended by some few soldiers and the merchants themselves with their ell-measure swords, was very prickly to attack in the dark. But . . .

Did I mention that in riding from the field of Monterosso I had chanced to pick up a small cannon? Not the kind of gun to which I was accustomed, of course, but a poor blacksmith-made thing five hands long, which nevertheless made a devil of a noise. This, loaded with stones, we found very effective in the circumstances aforesaid, both against civilians (albeit we mercifully fired over their heads) and, later, against the lines of communication of my lord the Count of Castello Nero.

For within a month, young Treni had demanded lands from him, just as he had demanded Monterosso from Casatico; only, since this would be a larger war, the Council of Nobles was pretending to try to compromise the affair. Ha! Meantime my lord's messenger (I mean my lord Pietro, who was President of the Council) came to me saying that Treni's victory was to be assured in this case also, but that I was on no account to show myself therein.

"Did His Grace," says I, "send me any garments of invisibility by any chance?"

"Nay," says this lawyer, cool as milk, "he said that continuance of this last month's crimes—for his benefit rather than your own—would suffice. Raids on Castello Nero's food trains and ammunition wagons and so on."

"What's toward?" I asked, more to change the subject than because I thought he could tell me.

The fellow looked down his nose. I learned later that he had drowned his wife in a cesspool and had accepted this mission to me as a device for fleeing Rometia forever. That was why he was so talkative.

For: "Captain," says he, "hast ever kept pigs?"

"I have stolen a good many of them," feeling for my dagger in case he should hint I had herded the brutes, "when I was younger."

He smiled up one side of his face.

"I could make a sermon on that, too," says he. "But my parable is this: The pig feeds, doth he not, encouraged thereto by the herdsman and doubtless thinking it is due to his own merits that he hath fine swill, and to his own virtues that he gets so fat. But when he hath become as fat as possible—and not before—what befalls him, Luigi Caradosso? Why, his throat is cut and he is made into sausages. Whereof the herdsman hath his share."

"But my lord of Treni is no pig," says I. "On the contrary, a man of parts, I should say."

"As is a pig to a peasant," says the lawyer, "so is any man—aye, even you and I, Luigi—to the powers of darkness."

"Meaning," says I, with a look that meant we would not mention my lord Pietro, "that banker from Zurich? Or was it Munich?"

He nodded, smiling up the other side of his face to show he also had my lord in mind.

"But what is to happen?" says I. "And when?"

"That," says the lawyer, "we shall see."

NOW, since Your Grace is no soldier but (if I may say so) an impatient young man, I will pass without description over four several campaigns and let Your High-

ness see what happened at last in this matter of Paolo di Treni. Ah, me—I say "at last" though who knows if in this world we ever come to the end of any chain of actions?

But Your Grace shall see.

In the first of these four campaigns, that against Castello Nero, I aided the young man, as I have said, by shortening the enemy's supplies; and at a cruicial moment of the battle (it was on my own responsibility, but he was about to have his right wing rolled up) saved the day by blundering my troop into two squadrons of his enemy's cavalry.

It was this—indignantly reported to Pietro by the poor youth it had saved—which led to my welcome recall. Convoy tickling and looting and so forth are all very well for youngsters, but we of the Red Troop were of an age to enjoy comfort.

So that it was with relief I heard myself damned up hill and down dale by my lord Pietro (in the presence of young Treni)—and taken back into the Rometian service lest I should further interfere with the young lord's battle plans. His battle plans. Ho ho!

"I'll have no banditry near my armies," says Paolo, looking very proud and fierce. "The falcon is not a carrion bird."

His crest was a falcon. Would Your Grace be good enough to bear that in mind? It will be seen to be important to what follows, though I did not pay much attention to that saying at that time. I was too amused at the poor lad's reference to his armies—he who had started forth (and beaten Casatico, as he thought)—with a guard of three hundred men and one gun! Thereafter, of course, he had been able to recruit the Monterosso yokels and, on security of his new lands, to borrow money to arm them. So that he had faced Castello Nero with five hundred men and three guns—which would not have availed him, but for me. . . .

"If there's to be no looting, your lordship must impose very strict discipline on the hired troops," says Pietro, whereat I pricked up my ears. "They have an evil repute for that kind of thing."

"Any man who loots in my service shall be hanged!" says Paolo, banging on the table with his innocent young fist. "It shall be so specified in making out the contract!"

Pietro sighed and wagged his head.

"I fear," says he, drawing a parchment from a drawer, "that this contract cannot now be altered, my lord. Having signed it, Signor Klotz departed this afternoon for Basel. Now might be a good time for your lordship to sign in turn. As regards the looting clause—perhaps on the next occasion—"

I had to sign as witness, so I saw the amount of that contract. Five thousand crowns, Your Grace, for a month's service of five hundred hirelings whose very captain had known no better than to cut himself to pieces on my sword! And it was this banker, who owned the rogues, that was lending his young lordship the money to pay them withal!

"It would oblige me," says my lord Pietro, shaking sand on the document, "if your excellency would overlook the past faults of my captain and permit him to learn from your lordship's handling of troops."

Yes, sire, Your Grace's father said those very words in my hearing and was not struck dead by a thunderbolt. Verily the mercies of God are past understanding.

Young Paolo regarded me sidewise, with distaste.

"If he could be present as an observer—a sort of apprentice?" says Pietro, his wicked eye gleaming at me. "It would be a kindness to myself."

"Very well," says Paolo, after more thought. "But he must come alone!"

So that it was in solitude—save for two sergeants and ten men of my own, and of course the hundreds of fellows who were butchering each other under our eyes—that I witnessed the battles of Bonelli, Cartresi and Rimaldo; all won by my lord of Treni by exercise of his natural genius and overwhelming forces of hired troops. God knoweth it is not my intent to pour scorn on the boy; he had his notions of the military art, very creditable notions. Indeed, had his imagination been a little less active, he might have made an excellent corporal. And if, by the ability to oppose ten soldiers to one, he acquired the idea that he was a great captain, whose fault was that?

Why, mainly that banker's, ably assisted by Your Highness' father.

I was present at their last interview with my lord of Treni, who now, following his conquests, styled himself Count of Monterosso, Tyrant of Bonelli, Count of Cartresi and Lord of Rimaldo—all titles which had been in his family aforetime, and which Your Highness will recognize as now appertaining to Your Grace. Each title had in turn been pawned to finance the gaining of the next, and now a loan on Rimaldo was to hire more troops still for the conquest of Montemurlo.

CHAPTER 3

BUT all was not as it had been at the signing of former contracts. Young Treni was as full as ever of ambition and faith in the justice of his cause and such-like rubbish, but, O, the change in the demeanor of my own lord and of that banker!

I noted it even before my lord, with a movement of his eyes, directed me to keep careful watch over young Treni. It was in fact in the eyes of the moneylender that first I saw doom for someone—and for whom, alas! I could guess only too well.

Not that my guess was comprehensive. As I said before, who can see to the end of things in this most murky world?

But it was with a heavy heart that I placed myself just one pace from the dagger hand of young Treni, who was explaining how his own forces—he now had a thousand men and four guns—had already taken the outlying village of Castelnuovo; how, when his mercenaries made junction on the morrow, he would advance irresistibly on the capital; and how, if Venice did not like his conquest, she could lump it.

Venice!.

"Tonight's courier reports," said the young man, all aglow, "that my lord of Montemurlo hath already marched—the rogue, he robbed my mother of these lands. So out with your contract, good master banker, and if Your Grace will permit me, I will ride to rejoin my troops this very night. My plan for the use of the hired infantry in this case—"

He babbled on, until at last Pietro spat out feathers from the pen he had been chewing and said, "Ahem!"

He had a cough, when he wished, that would have halted Gabriel in mid-trumpet-blast.

"Ahem!" says he again, and as Treni looked at him, he added: "In this matter of the Venetians—"

There was a terrible silence. Young Treni's mouth, so suddenly silenced, stayed open.

"It would seem," saith my lord Pietro, "at least, Master Klotz here expresseth some doubt—in short, the disapproval of a Republic so powerful— Your Lordship may be right, of course, from the military point of view that is, but politically—"

"And commercially," says the banker.

"Commercially too—and of course the hiring of troops, just now, is—well, let us rather put it that the lending of money for that purpose—or indeed any other—"

"With the crops as they have been this year," says the banker, in a voice like a mourning bell and cracked at that.

"You see?" says my lord Duke, raising his arms and letting them fall hopelessly on the table.

The banker put his chin on his hands and shook his head from side to side.

My lord of Treni bolted upright from his chair. His mouth, which had stayed open in amaze at the foregoing, now closed, so I moved closer to him.

"What—what mean you?" he demanded of the twain.

Well, sire, they told him. Lying by turns, and in turns confirming each the lies of the other, they told the young man how scarce was money that autumn, how dear food; how powder was in great demand at Naples and manflesh in the north; how Messer Someone of Venice had said to Signore So-and-so of Siena only last week, such and such; how barley was up in price and silk down—they told him every reason why he was to be left without money, and consequently without sufficient troops, in face of his advancing foe.

Except of course the true reason, which was that they had planned from the first that he should be so left, in order that by virtue of the mortgages he had given, and which this defeat (and his probable death) would prevent his repaying, they might seize for nothing what he had won at the cost of so much blood and peril.

That was bad enough, but of course yon fool of a money-lender must make it deadly.

"In any case," he mumbled, "'twould

be a question whether ye could hold these lands with your own forces, my lord, weakened as they are with all this fighting. Ye must have lost a couple of thousand men off the fields. Whereas my lord Pietro hath his army and population undiminished, and I stand behind him—"

I did not in the least wish to save the old goat's throat from cutting, but duty is duty and so I caught Paolo's dagger two inches from the rascal's neck-vein and tried to twist it out of the young man's hand. But instead he twisted himself out of my grasp and flew at Your Grace's father; leaving me no choice but to save His Grace by pushing His Eminence over backward, chair and all, and even so the poniard-point shore away his ribbon of the Order of the Holy Ghost. Thus balked, young Treni turned on me, stabbing my coat of mail so often and savagely that methought he might spoil it—and it had cost thirty florins only the week before—so that I buffeted him respectfully on the point of the chin and then fell on him.

That in the subsequent struggle we rolled rather heavily on my lord and that banker was due entirely to young Treni's agility and lust to kill someone. It was no fault of mine, though by breaking the banker's jaw and blackening one of Your Highness' father's eyes, the accident may have reminded them that they were but men. And so done good. For such as have outwitted their fellow-creatures (I have noticed) sometimes incline to think of themselves as superior beings, not to say gods; which is bad both for their souls and for their servants.

But at last comparative peace was restored; I holding young Treni's arms behind him and he spitting curses and wanions like a wildcat; the banker moaning through his cracked chops on the floor; and Your Grace's father (whose eye was not yet black) standing like a basilisk amid the ruins of the furniture.

"I think," says Pietro coldly, "that my lord of Treni hath wearied of our company, Captain. Doubtless he wishes to join his troops on the Montemurlo frontier."

"I can die with them!" cries the youth.

"Even so. Let him go and do it, Captain."

I let him go, and escorted him to the great gate of the castle, and saw him forth with his staff (alas, poor lad, his staff!) and tried to say some words of comfort to him—not too many, least he should weep. Seeing what lay before him, it seemed he had better be in a frame of mind to curse me, which he did.

So also did Pietro, when I returned to his cabinet—it seemed he had rung his bell six times, and sent two sentries and five valets running after me and still the Guard was not under arms. As he spoke, however, the great bell (rung on the authority of my lieutenant, whom I disciplined for the usurpation) began to clang over the battlements, and from the other side of the courtyard I could hear the men shouting and clattering and cursing at the late alarm.

"Away, away!" says my lord, whose eye was now very puffy. "Ye march in two hours at the latest!"

"To any destination in particular?" I asked him respectfully, though God knows, Your Grace, that (with all due respect) it was hard to respect him at that moment.

"Food! Idiot! Ass!" he replied, being, for all his lordship, at that moment mainly a man with a sore eye. "Where but to Montemurlo?"

MONTEMURLO, of course—but I had wanted him to say it.

I desired above everything not to act in their affair save on orders, for obedience to which mine oath of allegiance should excuse me at the Last Day.

I therefore asked what we were to do at Montemurlo when we got there; and was reviled and told we were to occupy any ground Treni's men might have won, and prevent Montemurlo from advancing farther than the ruins of Treni's army. Asked what we were to do with the dead, wounded and fleeing of the said defeated army, my lord ordered that they should be allowed to go to hell, but without their guns, which we were to bring back with us if possible. Returning, we were to fly the Treni falcon on a lance under the Rometian banner and to inform populations that they were now subjects of the good Duke. I gathered from His Grace's silence on the subject that no mention was to be made of the banker, and, the hour being ten of the evening and His Serenity's eye now closed, I withdrew.

We were at Montemurlo at dawn, a wet dawn, with some cold rain, and thunder threatening, and mists sliding down the hillsides into the valley.

It hath always been a grief to me, Your Highness' distaste for matters military; it afflicted me twenty years agone, when as a boy Your Grace would insist the right wing of an army was the left (and vice versa); and it afflicts me in this dark year of our Redeemer, 1580, when Your Highness moots dismissal of your Guard—*my* Guard, which I built up from a sergeants' file—in favor of hirelings. Nevertheless, it is an ill wind that blows no one good; and at this moment I am grateful for your aversion, in that my hands are rheumatick and my heart heavy and it will save me a description of that lamentable fight of Montemurlo.

Speaking of hirelings—in the half light before the dawn we saw those that should have been supporting young Treni, slouching back from Divulzio (the junction-point at which they had been posted to deceive him into confidence) toward Rometia. My men, occupying the road and (on my orders) indisposed to share it, pushed the rogues off the highway into the sloppy fields, and there they stood under our jeers, until our long column had passed—dumb beats hanging their heads over their pot-metal breastplates, without flag, without country, without courage, without honor and without shame.

As regards the battle on which they had turned their backs—I need weary Your Highness only with the particulars that it was fought between the hours of seven in the morning, which was broad daylight, and eleven, which was broader daylight still since the thunder had passed—but seemed like night to us because of the pall of smoke and dust which roofed in that fatal valley. The fight would have been over sooner—by ten o'clock at the latest—but for the desperate struggle maintained by young Treni and a handful around their flags, which had been planted on a hillock rising out of the valley floor.

I watched it with awe.

It was a little triangular hillock, covered with underbrush and little trees, and evil-minded rustics had given it a name with which I will not trouble Your Grace. By ten o'clock it had been shaved out of all attractiveness by artillery, and thenceforward it was the scene of such fighting as should have got its name changed to the Hill of Treni. But did not—nay, when I was there ten years ago it had its old name again, showing that men's memories are short but their concupiscence everlasting.

Whereas at eighty it is the other way around.

Ah me!

Well, obedient to my orders, I had not shown myself while the battle was in doubt—my troops, of course, were well out of sight, a mile behind the Treni battle line on the Rometia road—but I mean that by Pietro's command I had kept my bodily face from view, lest it compromise his neutrality.

Only after fugitives had told us that the Treni line was broken—nay, only after the last crack of the Treni falconets had vanished from hearing under the roar of the heavier Montemurlo guns, did I ride to the mouth of the valley and from a slight eminence survey the stricken field. I had with me my lieutenant and two sergeants, all in cloaks and with the hoods drawn over our faces.

It was a dismal sight indeed—all but the little hillock a bowshot from us, where, as I have said, fighting still continued under the ripped flags. Elsewhere one saw the aftermath of fighting, which is not so pleasant—smashed gun carriages and wagons, horses struggling to rise on broken legs, men writhing on the ground and men drenched in blood fumbling their comrades' clothes for plunder—other men without heads and still others with only too many visible bowels—but I become tedious.

After all, the upshot of the battle is all that matters

And this was victory for Montemurlo; no doubt of that, for all the postludium on the hillock We could see where the Montemurlo cavalry had struck the outnumbered Treni men—who had not broken under the shock, it seemed, but had fallen back in goodish order (their dead were beautifully spaced) on their guns. These, emplaced a little way up the hillside, had creditable semi-circles of Montemurlians before them, but the main body of cavalry had passed them by and driven the Treni men down to the foot of the valley. Here, in defiance of all reason, Treni had not only

halted but had counterattacked, and the battle had turned, by the look of things, into a sort of whirlpool, all of which that was now left was its center, revolving around that little hillock and soon (as one of my sergeants put it) to go down the drain.

Such being the case, I felt myself at liberty to ride forward and be seen; in the hope that the Montemurlo commander, possibly flushed with victory, might realize that after all he was not Julius Caesar, Alexander of Macedon or Luigi Caradosso, and that further advance would be inadvisable. Which he did, thus prolonging his life until we invaded Montemurlo six months afterward.

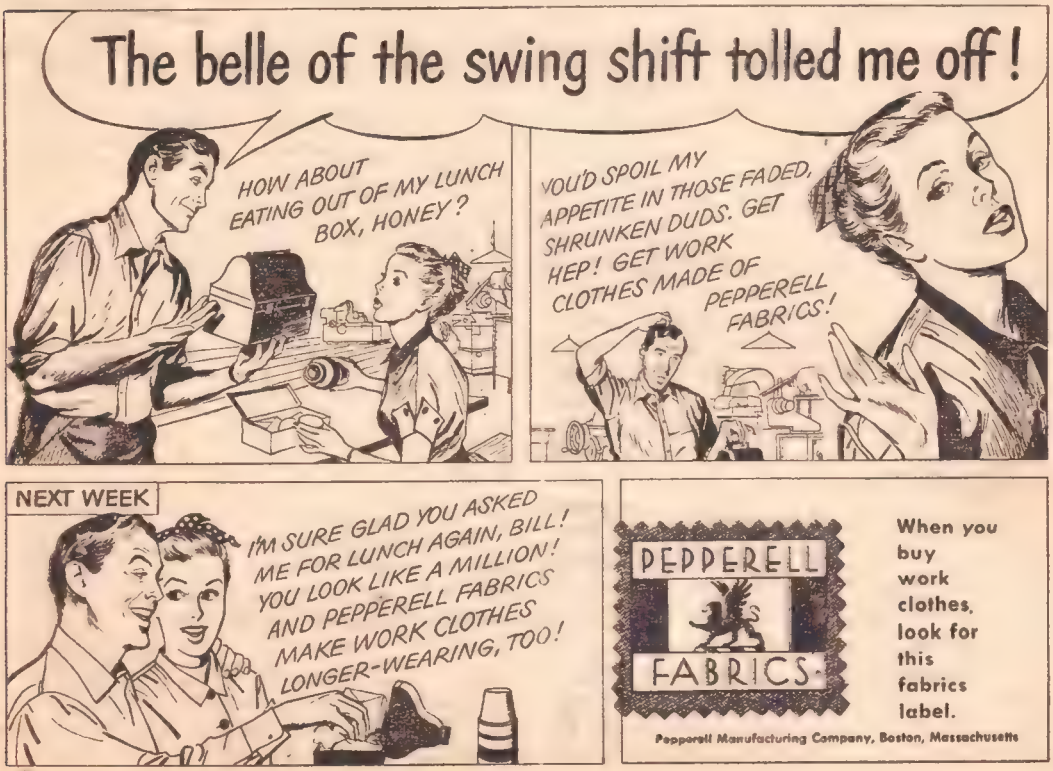
"They're bringing up guns," says my sergeant, and, looking up (my horse had grown used to picking his way between corpses), I saw that this was so. The Montemurlo horse and foot had broken their teeth on that hillock. Methought young Treni must, by some miracle, have survived—the hillock would have been his post of command, and if stragglers to it had put up such a stern resistance, meseemed he must still be there to inspire them.

I hoped that, seeing he was to be assailed now not by flesh and blood but by balls of iron, he would surrender, but the Montemurlo guns fired once—all six of them—and the clods of earth flew from the hillock, and even at our distance we could hear the shrieks of the wounded—but still the flags flew.

"Halt!" I said, and we sat there and watched. And the gunners reloaded, laughing as they rammed home the charges (because they were out of reach, you see) and fired again. And again. And again, until there was no human movement on the hillock any more, and a Montemurlo officer rode up to shout for surrender.

THERE was no answer, so he beckoned a sergeant's guard and advanced. So did we, and on the way up the hill I explained to this commander who I was, and how my troops were placed, which communication he received very amiably, saying that he had had enough fighting that day to last him a month of Sundays, thanks to this damned young coxcomb.

"Speak no evil of the dead," says I, spying young Treni at the foot of the flag-


The belle of the swing shift tolled me off!
HOW ABOUT EATING OUT OF MY LUNCH BOX, HONEY?
YOU'D SPOIL MY APPETITE IN THOSE FADED, SHRUNKEN DUDS. GET HEP! GET WORK CLOTHES MADE OF PEPPERELL FABRICS!
NEXT WEEK
I'M SURE GLAD YOU ASKED ME FOR LUNCH AGAIN, BILL! YOU LOOK LIKE A MILLION! AND PEPPERELL FABRICS MAKE WORK CLOTHES LONGER-WEARING, TOO!
PEPPERELL
FABRICS
When you buy work clothes, look for this fabrics label.
Pepperell Manufacturing Company, Boston, Massachusetts

staff. But, though very near death—he had a great gash across his forehead and God knows what other wounds—he had not yet died.

As I looked down at him, he opened his eyes; he was so far gone that his forehead-wound no longer bled into them.

"The falcon—the falcon!" says he, so I tore his banner off the lance and laid it over him. It was immediately scarlet. Also I raised his head to my knee, greatly to the detriment of my hose, and told him it had been a good fight and begged him not to use his last breaths in cursing the Duke. I asked this because curses, which may be as deadly as musket balls, cannot be as accurately aimed and, missing a noble, may hit his officers.

"Curse rather that damned banker," I urged him, at which, if Your Grace will believe me, he seemed to try to smile. Moreover his lips moved, but even by putting my ear to his mouth I could distinguish nothing but the words "banker" and "hereafter" and then his eyes closed.

And when I put my wine flask to his lips he bubbled and the liquor ran out of the corners of his mouth and his head fell back.

And so I laid him down.

"Comes of relying on mercenaries," I said to the Montemurlo captain.

"M'm," says he, nodding. "Fine boy, too."

"I was wondering," says I, somewhat astonished at myself, "if Your Honor would permit me to take the body? Your victory is so complete as to admit of no question" (he bowed) "and I think my lord Pietro might wish to make some gesture along the lines of a public funeral."

"Certainly, certainly," says the captain, evidently as familiar as myself with the decencies of treachery.

And so, after my men had had their soup, I sent back one of the sergeants with ten men and a horse-litter.

And they returned saying my young lord's body was no longer there.

"Under the falcon flag, you fool," I said to the sergeant.

"Under favor," says he, saluting, "the flag is gone too, captain."

Well, miracles are miracles, and then again that Montemurlo captain might have changed his mind; further, it was miserable weather and Your Highness' father had adjured me to return and so I gave marching orders and thought no more of Paolo di Treni.

Until, some years ago, I heard of the death of that banker by name Klotz.

What brought my young lord of Treni to my mind on that occasion, was the fact that in the dead man's hand was found *the feather of a falcon.*

What causes me to think of the poor youth again now—and indeed to have written Your Grace this letter at dire pain to my fingers—is the circumstance that this Venice banker who by letter urgeth Your Grace to disband the Guard and in face of the Florentine menace to rely on his money appears to call himself *Ugo Falcone.*

Would it not be strange if for all his bone-bared brow and death-mutter about "banker" and "hereafter", young Treni should have survived, and sent the banker into the hereafter; thereafter by some quirk of fate or hatred becoming a banker himself, with hope to repay Your Grace's father's villainy (as he might call it) to Your Grace's father's son? Young Treni would be (if I reckon rightly) fifty-six years old by now, an age at which kisses begin to pall, and revenge tastes all the sweeter in the mouth.

Of course it is impossible, but I should not like to see Your Grace defying Florence while relying on hired troops which might not arrive.

Being, despite my respectful refusal to command such scum

And kissing the hands of Your Excellency while again regretting having stripped poor harmless Master Cerchio Rinaldi—bravo of these degenerate days, God save the mark

Humbly Your Grace's devoted apprehensive servant

L. Caradosso
Captain.

ENDORSEMENT BY THE DUKE

Let this Falcone be visited in Venice. If he be scarred on the forehead and fifty-six years of age, I do not wish to hear from him further. Let this be seen to.

REPORT BY CERCHIO RINALDI

The said Falcone was scarred as above.

He would have been fifty-seven next August.

Famous Military Corps

7. THE KNIGHTS OF SAINT JOHN

SOME thirty or forty years before the knights of the First Crusade had established the Latin kingdom of Jerusalem, a group of Christian merchants living in Damascus asked permission of the Egyptian Calif, of that city, to found a society to succor sick Latin pilgrims that passed thru the city. The Calif assented to their request and thus were born the Knights of Saint John of Jerusalem or Hospitallers later to be known as the Knights of Rhodes and lastly as the Knights of Malta.

To their original charitable duties the knights soon added military activities and in the most constant fighting that marked the life of the Kingdom of Jerusalem; they competed with the Templars for power and loot but luckily they never became so powerful as their rivals and thus escaped the fate that overtook the Templars when Philip of France and Pope Clement V decided to destroy them.

In 1291, the Hospitallers were expelled from Jerusalem and seized the Island of Rhodes as their headquarters. Here they became the bulwark of Christianity against the infidels and, by necessity, organized a fleet.

From this time on the Knights did their fighting mostly from decks instead of saddles and for over two hundred years maintained their island stronghold. In 1523, Suleiman the Magnificent finally drove them from Rhodes and they took over the island of Malta. In 1565, the Turks made a tremendous attempt to capture Malta but the Knights under their indomitable leader, La Vallette, held fast and in 1571 were strong enough to take a decisive part in the Battle of Lepanto where the Turkish naval power was crushed.

Their last years as a potent naval power in the Mediterranean, were from 1722 to 1736 under their great master Antonio Manoel. Although they had long since ceased to be a fighting force, the knights sent an expedition to Sicily in 1775 to rescue the victims of the disastrous earthquake of that year.

In 1798, Napoleon on his way to Egypt, seized Malta and terminated the societies' nearly 300-year tenure of the island and their existence as a governing power.

—By Howard R. Voight

DEVIL IN THE

A priceless boon it was for a boy to give—a bullet from the heart!

WHEN DAVID HOGENSON awoke that morning he was aware of the thought that it was a special day. They had let him sleep late this morning—it was seven already—and while he dressed he could smell the fine odors coming up the stairwell from the kitchen, and

SKY

by JOHN PRESCOTT

hear the remote and muffled conversation of his mother and father and sister, Ollie. Through the open window he could hear Mr. McKilligan whistling a tune near the machine shed as he readied the spray for a run through the cherry orchards; and then he heard Peter bark outside the kitchen door, and become silent as it was opened for him.

Soon Peter's claws were clicking on the oak steps and he came up in bounds and burst into David's room. Peter was six years old and David had got him from his father for his sixth birthday. He was mostly

brown and white collie, and was sometimes far more dignified and patrician than his age would indicate, but there were other times when he was little different from a pup.

He snuffled around David's feet, tugged at one of David's denim trouser legs and then sat down expectantly near the window and waited.

"I guess you know what day this is," David said to him. David had one leg in his trousers and he was hopping around trying to get the other in. "This is my birthday, and that means we can do pretty much as we want to all day long. We can go over to the bluff and go fishing, or we can go down to the lumber dock at Sister and go swimming."

He sat down in a cane-backed chair to pull his shoes and socks on.

"Or maybe we can go hunting—" David said, but more slowly— "if we get the rifle."

He had been thinking about the rifle for so long that he could not really remember when it had not been in his mind, and he knew the feel of it as though he had possessed it for years. He knew exactly how it would fit into the crook of his arm when he carried it and how it would smack against his shoulder when he squeezed the trigger. It would make a sharp crack when it was fired. He had hinted around for it more than was probably decent, but he still could not tell if it would be waiting downstairs for him or not. His mother had been very outspoken in her belief that rifles should be the property of grown men only, but on the other hand he had been hunting with his father for two years and it could possibly be that his father considered him old enough to have his own gun now.

But there was no telling, of course, until he went down there and saw for himself. There had been no real indication as to how things might go at all.

"Maybe we'll get some red squirrels," David said to Peter as he tied a shoelace. "An awful lot of 'em around the property and they ought to be cleaned out. Why, I saw a whole mess of 'em down in the woodlot near the bluff the other day, and they were really making things bad for the grays."

He stood up and took a clean handkerchief out of the dresser drawer and put it in his pocket. He smoothed the covers on the bed and lowered the window.

"Well," he said, then, "I guess we'd better go down now. You keep your toes crossed about that gun."

THE exciting odors from the kitchen became stronger as they went down the stairs and through the long hall with the green velvet portiers hanging in the archway of the living room. David's mother had already cooked one breakfast, for Mr. McKilligan, but she and David's father and sister had waited for the second one. Ollie was fourteen and normally very charming, but she was a little miffed because they had to wait for David.

"I thought you'd sleep all day," she said to him as he slid into his place at the table. "I would on my birthday. I think I'd just sleep right on through to sundown. But I'm glad you didn't because I'm hungry and we've waited long enough."

"Well, maybe a girl would," David said to her, "but we've got things to do and lying in bed won't get them done."

His mother brought a platter of pancakes and sausages from the stove. She was a small woman, but it had always seemed to David that she had more energy and spirit than any other woman he had ever seen. She put the platter on the table and leaned down to kiss him on the cheek.

"Happy birthday, son," she said, and she looked at Ollie. "When it's your birthday you can do as you please, too. If David wants to do things his way that's all right."

She stepped back to the middle of the floor and appraised him with gray eyes, lighted with humor. "What do you have to do that's so important, David? We didn't want to spoil things by making plans without your knowing, but we thought, if you were agreeable, that we might plan a picnic up at Northport, and perhaps a movie over at Bailey's tonight. I think *Red River* is over there."

Ollie squealed through a mouthful of the pancakes. "Oh, Montgomery Clift is in that one, David! Please say it's all right."

David did not know very much about Montgomery Clift, but he was very familiar with the exploits of Mr. John Wayne, who was also in the picture, and the thought was appealing. Besides, it was a Western,

and there wouldn't be much mush in it.

"The movie would be fine," he said, and then he added more carefully, "but we've got things to do today and maybe we could have the picnic some other time. Maybe Sunday."

David's mother returned to the stove and poured another dollop of the thick egg batter into the frying pan.

"Whatever you say, David. It's your day. I suppose you'll go fishing, or swimming. Louie Newman stopped by earlier to see about your father's spray for next week and he said the bass were biting over at North Bay. Maybe your father would drive you over if you cared to go."

David swallowed a sausage before he answered.

"Well, we're not exactly sure yet," he hedged. "We haven't really talked it over." He wondered if he ought to mention anything about the red squirrels in the woodlot, but he thought that might be too bald, and decided against it.

Then the voices of Mr. McKilligan and his father became louder and presently the kitchen door opened and his father came through it. He was so much bigger than David's mother that it was sometimes laughable to see them together. David often thought that his father considered it a joke himself, because he frequently accorded his mother the attention and affection that one would bestow upon a little girl.

His father came into the kitchen with his hands held behind him and smiled broadly at David.

"I didn't think you could stay in bed on a day like this," he said. "I figured you and Pete would be up to something. Happy birthday, David."

David said, "Thank you," and watched closely as his father walked crab-wise across the room between the stove and the sparkling new refrigerator. He edged along as though he might be hiding something behind his back and David dared to wonder if it might not be the rifle. He had never seen his father do a thing like that before.

Then, all at once, there it was. His father swung his arms around and the rifle lay glinting and lovely in his hands. It was just the one he'd wanted, only now it was so much more beautiful than when it had reposed in the advertising of the sporting magazine.

His father thrust it forward.

"Happy birthday again," he said and David felt the hardness of the stock and barrel. "I've been thinking about the red squirrels down near the bluff and it seems they're getting pesky."

"Why, I was thinking the same thing," David said, and then he saw the wink of humor in his father's eyes, and colored. The gun was very firm in his hands—the barrel gleamed with a soft, blue luster and the small five-shot magazine jutted out just right in front of the trigger guard. He worked the bolt experimentally and massaged the stiff, sweet-smelling leather of the sling. New leather was always wonderful.

"Well, golly, thanks," he said. "Golly, thanks a million. I guess I've wanted a gun like this for as long as I can remember—especially with those red squirrels getting the way they are. You know what they do to the grays."

"Oh, yes," his father said. "Oh, yes, indeed. They're pretty bad, but maybe we've got them licked now." He laughed and David's mother wiped her hands on her apron as she came around and looked at the rifle.

"Well, it looks nice enough," she said tentatively, "but it seems to me you're awfully young to have a thing like that of your own. I don't know—"

"He'll probably shoot out every window in the house," Ollie said, and David felt his neck get warm.

David's father cleared his throat. "Well, now, after all he's twelve years old—he's getting to be a young man, and owning his own gun is part of it."

"I know all about that," David's mother said, and David was aware now that they were speaking above him the way that parents sometimes did. "But he's still young, and you know how things can happen. You know what happened to Jo Erickson last winter, and he's a grown man. Whenever I think of that I don't believe anyone should have a gun—not even you."

David's father cleared his throat again, more positively this time. When he did it that way he always got attention.

"Now, listen here," he said. "Jo Erickson was a fool to go through a fence that way and I told him so to his face in the hospital. He got what he deserved and he's

lucky to be alive. I give David credit for more sense than that—he's been shooting my guns for a year and more and there's no reason he can't have one of his own. How's he ever going to grow up if you don't give him a chance?"

David's mother removed the platter from the table, and David knew she did not entirely agree.

"Well, you be careful," she said to him. "You don't want to spoil your birthday—or any day."

"The only way it will be spoiled," David's father said, winking, "is by too much talking from the women."

IT WAS a very special and wonderful day at that, David had decided. There were other things beside the rifle. He got a pair of hand-knit socks from Ollie, some white shirts and a collie book by Albert Payson Terhune from his mother; and when he went out to show the rifle to Mr. McKilligan the hired man had a fine stag-handled hunting knife for him.

A good many people around there wondered what a Scotsman was doing in a Scandinavian community and he always said he liked it there because the country reminded him of certain parts of Scotland—the border country. David knew that Mr. McKilligan had never been to Scotland, but that seemed to make it all the better. He always thought it was a nice tribute and it pleased him to think that the land along Lake Michigan might be similar to the crags and blue water and forests of Mr. McKilligan's mind.

"Now, that's a good Sheffield blade," Mr. McKilligan explained about the knife. Mr. McKilligan had wide, rough hands, much like the structure and texture of his face, and the knife flashed in the sun against the browned skin. He winked at David and smiled through his carefree, yellow mustache. "I tried to get you one from Glasgow, but this is the best that could be had—it's from Thorson's down at Sister."

"I think it's very fine," David said seriously. He did not know whether Mr. McKilligan was pulling his leg or not with the winking and the talk of Glasgow, but he did not want to risk an offense by laughing at him. "It has a very sharp edge."

"You bet it has," Mr. McKilligan said. "And one you won't be ever honin' at. It's good hard steel—you can likely cut clean through a crowbar with this."

"I don't know if I ought to try that or not," David said, and then he was quiet while Mr. McKilligan inspected the rifle, swung it to his shoulder and sighted at a seagull flying inland from the lake. When he gave it back he patted David's shoulder and twisted the end of the mustache with his fingers.

"It's a beauty, all right," he said. "Take care what you shoot at, though."

Mr. McKilligan paused with his hand halfway down from his mustache and David thought he was going to say something about getting careless like Jo Erickson. But then he simply smiled and went back to the spray machine, and David heard him muttering over it as he and Peter walked away.

To get to the woodlot they had to go down halfway through the north orchard and then turn west toward the bluff, which stood a hundred feet and more above the surface of the lake. It was about a quarter of a mile altogether—though nearer a half if they were to go all the way to the edge of the bluff—and as they hiked through the endless flow of orchard David found that he was considering the land, and his association with it, in a light much different from before.

It was probably the rifle that had caused it—the rifle seemed to imply a definite step toward manhood and its attendant responsibilities, and his mind was going beyond the immediate joys of his existence to the inevitability of his having to stand in his father's place, as his father had in *his* father's place, and so on back. . . .

No one in his living family seemed to know just why it was that his great-grandfather had come up into this Wisconsin country in the first place, but David was always glad that he had, because he could never think of anything more beautiful than the orchard and forest-topped limestone ridge thrusting into the clean coolness of Lake Michigan.

David thought his great-grandfather must have been a man of tenacious purpose and vast endurance to have chopped his living out of the forest the way he had, and to have passed on to his descendants the fertile acres which rolled away as far as he could see. It made him wonder if he himself might

measure up to size with strength and courage—he was not entirely certain. It would take a lot of growing and he knew it.

FOR all the plans they had made against the red squirrels they could not seem to find a single one when they entered the woodlot. It appeared that those wily creatures had sensed out their expedition in advance and had taken refuge in the highest trees. It was a quiet day in July, with light airs barely shifting and turning the leaves; sounds carried a great distance in that stillness. He could easily hear the surf booming in white combers against the limestone cliff a quarter of a mile away; he could hear the jays scolding the way they always seemed to do; the snap of brush and forest carpeting was quite plain as he and Peter walked along. But not a red squirrel betrayed its hiding place above them.

In length the woodlot paralleled the north orchard and went way south beyond the house, while in width it extended to the ragged rim of the bluff itself. David had thought they would go straight in, but because there were no squirrels as far as they had gone, they turned south beyond the house with the intention of cutting west at the end of the woodlot.

They proceeded cautiously and slowly, and Peter, who understood quite well what they were doing, repressed his natural inclinations to bark and cavort, and stayed close in to David with his ears pointed straight ahead and his nose sampling every current of air. But the red squirrels remained as elusive as they had before.

"I don't know, Peter," David said after a while. "We've been in here nearly an hour and we haven't seen a thing. I'll bet they're just sittin' up in there laughing at us."

Peter swung his nose alertly toward the tops of the trees, and then he smiled at David as though fully aware of the red squirrels' craft.

"I guess it's probably a good thing we don't have to count on them for food," David said. "I think we'd be going hungry."

Still it was fine being in there, red squirrels or no red squirrels. The hunt was not spoiled by the dearth of quarry because David was happy simply to be among the trees and the splintered shafts of sunlight with Peter, and with the new rifle gripped comfortably in his hands. To have the gun at all, and to be allowed to hunt unaccompanied that way, gave him a sense of maturity which he had never had before, and so it would not be too bad if they did not bag anything on their first excursion.

After a while they turned west, and because the squirrels were as rare over that way as they had been elsewhere they relaxed a little and did not restrain themselves as much as they had been doing. Peter came off his hunting manners and pretty soon David slung the rifle snugly against his shoulder and began to throw sticks away off into the brush for Peter to streak after, his bright tail waving behind him like a plume.

He threw quite a few sticks and each time Peter would lunge away with much barking, and retrieve, and then one time David tossed one high over a sharp rise and when Peter disappeared he did not come back right away. For a long while it was very quiet in the small glade where David stood, and all at once, as he started up the rise to look, Peter's voice exploded in a shiver of cutting shrieks.

The strange fear of things terrible and unknown clutched at David's middle as he stumbled through the brush to the top of the rise and down the other side. He could not see Peter right away, but he followed the continuing shrill of agony until he found the collie near the bole of a giant pine, heaving himself in frenzy against something which held him nearly pinned to the ground.

David saw the ugly rusted jaws of the trap when he broke through the brush and went to his knees at the side of the terrified dog. He had seen traps many times before—had helped his father with his winter lines—but never had he seen one like that. It was very old and very large; it was probably a bear trap that had lain concealed and forgotten for many years, and it was a wonder that the mechanism had not rusted away, as had the chain which had held it to the tree.

It had not done that, though, but had waited with treachery and had clamped its daggers into the soft flesh and fine bones of Peter's upper foreleg. The bones were shattered in protruding needles, and the blood flowed too fast to be other than arterial.

Peter's voice subsided into chattered moaning and his eyes were begging as

David held him in his arms and wondered what to do. His mind was a sick miasma of confusion until he thought of the rifle, and quickly unslung it and thrust the barrel between the jaws of the trap. They were stiff and tight, but the old spring gave slowly as he increased the pressure, and at last they were open far enough for him to slide the barrel in until the wood of the stock would hold them open.

When he removed Peter's leg the blood pumped in bright spurts and he wound his handkerchief around the upper leg and inserted a stick through the loop, drawing it tight. The dangerous jetting stopped, and in a moment he was able to sling the rifle, and staggering, lift Peter into his arms. Peter was very quiet now, and David was afraid.

IT WAS a quarter of a mile to the orchard and David was nearly numb with fatigue when he came out of the woodlot. He could hear the exhaust of the tractor and the spray and then he saw Mr. McKilligan stumping toward him through the cherry-bent boughs of the trees. Mr. McKilligan was nearly aghast as he stared at the blood all over Peter and David, and David shouted at him before he came to them.

"Get Doctor Anders!" he yelled. "Get Doctor Anders right away! Peter got in a trap and he's hurt—he's hurt bad!"

Mr. McKilligan wheeled up beneath the branch of a tree and paused only momentarily before he swung away and ran wobbly-legged toward the house. The sun was very bright upon the dry earth where he was running and David saw the dust-puffs bursting beneath his shoes as he followed him with Peter.

His father and Ollie were the first ones out of the house when he came around the corner of the machine shed and went inside. Ollie smashed a pile of straw flat and spread it wide, and the collie seemed very weak and loose when David put him down. The blood ran in spurts again when he loosened the tourniquet for a moment, and his father looked at the wound with puckered lips and his wide face scowling.

"Golly, David, this looks bad," he said, and he hunkered down and looked more closely at the splinters spiking through the hair and ragged flesh. "McKilligan said it was a trap, but I sure don't know of any trap out there."

"It was an old one," David said, and he stood up and looked helplessly around. He saw his mother coming down the kitchen steps with a pan of water and a handful of rags. "It must have been there a long time—" He felt the urgency of doing something, but he knew there was nothing.

He stroked Peter's head and rubbed behind his ears, but he knew there was no comforting him with things like that. He felt cornered in his impotence to help and his desperation drove him to his feet and through the door. He walked across the yard and leaned the rifle against the side of the house and went around the corner and stood in the graveled drive, leading to the road. He had never felt so utterly empty and without purpose. There was nothing to do and he was helpless.

He stood there staring into the nothing beyond the blue, high sky, the elms along the drive and the endless ranks of cherry trees in the orchard. He stood there staring until the doctor's coupe turned in from the road and raised a spine of dust in the yard behind the house. David ran beside it until it stopped.

Dr. Anders came out of it with his bag. He was a round man and it just then occurred to David that he looked a good deal like Mr. McKilligan, except that Dr. Anders' mustache was gray and not so jaunty. The doctor smiled carefully at him as he closed the door.

"It's going to be all right, David," he said. "Collies are tough—they strain from the wolf."

"He's hurt bad. He's hurt real bad," David said with no expression, and he followed the veterinarian into the shed.

Mr. McKilligan had come out of the house with an old blanket and he and Ollie and David's mother and father all stood to one side with compassion when the doctor and David came into the shed. The doctor knelt on the straw and David studied his face intently, but there was nothing in it that told him anything.

Then Doctor Anders put his hands on his knees and rose to his feet. He looked around the shed and he took David's arm and they walked out into the sun. The others trailed behind and stood stiffly and with self-consciousness near the door; heavily, as though

the doctor's manner had communicated something dire to them.

David stood on the soft grass and looked at the doctor's face, implanted in the sky above him. Devil in the sky, he thought, without meaning the doctor at all.

"I'm sorry, David," he was hearing. "Peter's hurt a good deal more than I thought he was at first. His shoulder's broken, and that's something that can't be fixed very well with the bones all smashed the way they are."

The doctor's voice was a part of all sounds coming into David's consciousness.

"Sometimes when animals get hurt badly like that," the doctor said, "it's best to help them—"

"Kill them," David said.

"There's a painless way," Doctor Anders said slowly. "They simply go to sleep. It's a form of gas in a tight room."

"He'd be alone in there," David said, "and he'd wonder. I raised him from the litter. He always slept in my room—on the foot of the bed until he got too big. It wouldn't be right."

"Well, David, it's a matter of mercy," the doctor said, and he sounded weary. They were standing side by side and it was unreal what they were talking about. "Peter's in a state of shock now—there's not much pain at present, but—"

"He'd be alone in there," David said again. "In a strange place, not knowing anything. He was always with me—I raised him since his eyes were opened."

David turned away from the veterinarian and saw the others standing at the entrance to the shed. They had probably known before he had because they had seen it more objectively. He looked at them and the sun was high and warm on his neck. There were no sounds anywhere except for the tractor in the orchard. No wind and tree sounds, no birds. Everything was quiet now.

He moved his feet and walked to the corner of the house where he had left the rifle. He picked it up and saw the marks in the barrel and the deep scars in the walnut stock—he could smell the sweetness of the sling. The gun did not feel good in his hands now, and he did not know if he would ever have the courage to use it after this. But he knew what he was doing.

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The Jawbone of Shamus Macroom

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Said Sergint Macroom, "'Tis me belief that the jawbones of an ass are scarce commodities in Samar. I had to do the best that I could with the tools which I had to the hand of me. . . ."

We hear the ladrones go hellin' by, but I know they will not be fooled for long. . . .

By
WILLIAM
CHAMBERLAIN

THE STORY is an old one and it is long since I have read it last. Still, as I remember it, it goes this way.

The thing happens some time ago down in the River Jordan country. There is a young feller there who goes by the name of Samson, although it is likely that O'Samson would have suited him better, since he is an umbrageous lad with a temper which is sudden an' scandalous to see. Not that he is a bad lad at heart, you understand—he is good to his folks an' a hard worker when the spirit is upon him.

No, the main complaint that the neighbors have got to make

about the boy is that he persists in brawlin' continuous with the Philistines. These Philistines happen to be the party in power in the Jordan Valley at the moment—the Samsons an' their neighbors havin' about the same status as a Republican in Texas. That bein' the case, the activities of young Samson prove embarrassin'. So they call a town meetin' one evening.

A feller in a long gray beard gets up an' makes a speech at some length.

Then the town clerk, who is a skinny little runt with chin whiskers, gets up an' reads through his nose from a long paper.

"Whereas," says the clerk, "the said Samson has again committed a breach of the peace, to wit: He has collected three hundred foxes together an' he has tied the tails of the three hundred foxes together, two by two, an' he has tied a firebrand to each pair of said tails an' he has lighted said firebrands an' has turned foxes an' firebrands loose together into the fields an' vineyards of the Philistines; an' whereas said firebrands have lighted fires which have caused considerable damage to said vineyards an' fields, to say nothin' of the olive trees, an' whereas said Philistines (a pox be upon the lot of 'em) are more than somewhat upset on account of the afore-mentioned events an' promise to be considerable ugly about the whole affair; be it hereby resolved, then, that the said Samson—he bein' directly responsible for the whole unpleasantness—shall be bound with a rope an' delivered to the said Philistines forthwith."

He paused, awesome.

"To do with as the Philistines sees fit," the clerk concludes, sour. He squints at Samson. "An' may the Lord have mercy upon 'em," he adds under his breath.

Well, to make a long story short, they take Samson an' they set him out on a rock in the sun an' leave him. It is maybe four o'clock in the afternoon an' he is gettin' drier than one of Father Mahoney's sermons when he hears the sound of men an' horses comin' up the gulch. He raises up, then, an' sees that it is young Jake Pharpar with maybe a thousand men of his bodyguard behind him.

This Jake Pharpar is a face card of some kind among the Philistines, and two years before Samson has stole his girl away from him an' he has not forgot. He cuts Samson a dirty one across the face with the lash of his ridin' whip.

Well, Samson says slow an' with a great dignity: "Jake, ye should not have done that. Now do ye loose me an' get me a drink of water, else I am like to lose me temper with ye."

"I will cut me initials in the feet of ye with a red hot iron!" says this Jake Pharpar. "I will pick out your eyes an' will feed them to the goats! I will—"

Well, as I have said, this Samson is a reasonable an' a peace-lovin' young feller, but it is too much to ask of the boy that he lie there with the thirst bad upon him while this Pharpar squirt polishes him off with a ridin' whip. So he busts the ropes which they have tied him up with an' he climbs down off of the rock. There is the jawbone of an ass layin' there an' Samson picks it up an' looks at Jake Pharpar.

Well, to make a long story short, Samson lights into Jake Pharpar an' his Philistines in a manner which is little short of scandalous. When the dust has cleared away the sight in that gulch would have done an undertaker's heart good to see, an' the only live Philistines is maybe a half a dozen which is footin' it across the hills in considerable haste.

Samson looks around reflective.

"With the jawbone of an ass," he says sort of meditative like, "I have killed a thousand men. 'Tis an unconventional weapon, to be sure. Still, it has its uses as perhaps the soldier men who come after me will find out likewise."

Well, the story goes on that this Samson later gets into trouble over some woman down in Gaza an' comes to a bad end. Howsoever, trouble or no trouble, he was a good lad an' the job that he did here in that gulch has been equaled but once since to my knowledge.

That once is down in Samar, an' it brings to my mind one Shamus Macroom—a laughin' an' red-headed man who is a fighter of parts in his own right.

IT IS more years back than I like to think, an' I am in Manila on sick furlough while I recuperate from a hammered iron slug which one of the little brown brothers down in Mindanao has bunged into the leg of me a while back. The wound is well

healed now, but me furlough still has a matter of some thirty days to run yet an' I am in no hurry to get back to Zamboango

For one thing the Moros have all become inflicted with peace an' quiet down there at the moment. The regiment is doin' nothin' but garrison duty, an' me friend, Sergint Pinky Malone, writes me that things is about as excitin' as a Sunday in Philadelphia. Then, too, there is another reason why I am content to dally in Manila.

Her name is Marguerita an' she has got black eyes an' a manner of lookin' at a man out of the corner of 'em. Well, I am young in them days with no more sense than has a dickey bird—not havin' learned as yet that trouble flourishes around a woman as weeds flourish in an onion bed. Be that as it may, on this night I am prancin' down the Calle Santo Tomas with a flower on me coat an' the head of me full of tender sentiments an' little else.

Me face gets red still when I think of it.

Up to the moment I have courted Marguerita more or less off the limits, so to speak, she havin' told me that her folks is unreconstructed Don Castiles who look upon the American soldiery as bein' considerable pernicious in any way, shape or form. I am not musical by nature, but maybe a week ago Marguerita has spoke thusly to me when we meet in secret in the little patio down the street.

"My Michael," she says, "eet ees thee song that you mus' learn so that you weel then come an' seeng to me beneath thee balcony, no?"

"Why?" I ask her puzzled. "It has seemed to me that I have been doin' right well here in the patio in the dark up to now."

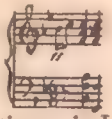
"Ah," she tells me, "eet ees that you do not onderstan'. Eet ees thee *costumbre* that thee *caballero* ees seeng beneath thee balcony of thee lady. You weel come, no?"

" 'Tis small experience in troubadourin' that the O'Hares have had," I admit. "Still, if it's the thing to do, Michael O'Hare will be there come Saturday night."

Well, like I said, there is no depth of depravity into which a woman cannot lead a man. I buy a guitar an' I get hold of one Pepe Fernando who tends bar down at the Oriental. I pay him five dollars Mex an' durin' the week he teaches me to play a few chords an' to sing one song. The words is in Spanish an' translated they run something like this, as I remember:

"Little yellow bird, sittin' on a bough,
Tomorrow I will shoot you an' put you
in a pie."

The sentiment is not exactly amorous, bein' more on the gastronomic side, but Pepe tells me that it is highly esteemed as a love song an' I let it go at that. So it is that on this Saturday night I sally forth to my serenadin'. It is a nice night for it, too, the moon bein' three-quarters full an' the evening not too hot.

Well, to make a long story short, there is lights in the windows of Marguerita's house an' so I take station under the little balcony which juts out over the sidewalk an' I raise my guitar to the ready position. I try a chord tentative or two an' then launch out into a recital of the doin's of the little yellow bird.

IT IS MY maiden debut in public, so to speak, an' I am a little shy at first. Howsoever, after I have sung it once through I am considerable more confident an' so, on the second lap, I pull out the stops an' get into the swing of the thing. The O'Hares might be a little shy on the melody side of singin' but they ain't ever been accused of bein' lackin' in volume. I hear windows bangin' shut up an' down the Calle Santo Tomas.

I am just startin' on my third chorus when I hear footsteps on the balcony above me an' see a dark figure leanin' over the rail.

Well, I am into the spirit of the thing now, so I sling the guitar on me back and reach for the posy which is pinned to the front of me coat. I pull it loose an' toss it up.

"A rose for me lady fair," I say, or words to that effect.

A voice which a screech owl would not have owned up to answers me back. "Peeg!" it says. "*Americano* peeg! Go away from here queek!"

Aha, I think. Marguerita is bein' coy an' she has sent her mama out to talk with me. I will flatter the old lady with some honeyed words—it will do me no harm to get in good with the family.

"A good evenin' to ye, madam," I say. "'Tis nice weather that we are havin'. Sure, it is young an' pretty that ye are lookin' this evenin'."

I do not make much headway.

"Peeg!" she says. "You 'ave make thee howl like ten thousan' tomcat. Go away from here!"

Well, something tells me that all ain't well but I am persistent. I have not sweated in the back room of the Oriental Bar for nothing.

"Madam," I retort dignified, "'tis sorry I am if me voice does not please ye. Howsoever, it was not meant for ye in the first place. If ye will kindly ask Miss Marguerita to step out for a minute—"

She interrupts me with a cacklin' sound which I take is meant to be laughter.

"Marguerita!" she says. "Marguerita ees marry Don Felipe three—four days ago. She ees go to leeve een thee Calle Dos Hermanos w'ile you seeng thee song here like thee great calf wheech ees lose hees mama, no?"

Well, it is a bitter blow at the moment an' it comes to me that I am indeed a great fool to be standin' there in the moonlight with me mouth hangin' open as though to catch flies. The cacklin' of the old hag standin' up there on the balcony does not calm me either.

"Grandmaw," I say to her impolite, "do ye hush the silly sounds that ye are makin' up there on your perch before I come an' give ye the spankin' that ye deserve."

She screeches once more an' then is quiet—I can hear her feet go shufflin' across the balcony. She will think before she bandies words with an O'Hare the next time, I reflect grim. Well, like I have said, I am young an' do not have the sense which God gives to majors in the sanitary corps. Later on I learn not to stand under balconies with infuriated females upon 'em.

The water pot catches me square, settin' me down on the stern of me in the street an' soakin' me in a manner something scandalous. Up above that old she-demon is cursin' in seven languages all at once.

Well, for a minute I set there. Then I am aware that I am not alone. There is a man standin' there in the moonlight in the middle of the Calle Santo Tomas. He is a big man, I see, wearin' the stripes of a sergint on his arms, an' he is laughin' with great whoops which displease me considerable.

I get to me feet slow.

"Ye have seen something that has amused ye?" I inquire icy.

"Amused me!" he says. "Friend, I have not seen anything so funny since the day we hanged Bogardus Smith down in San Antonio, Texas. If ye could only have seen yourself sittin' there with the rim of the water pot about the neck of ye!"

I walk forward slow.

"I am a patient an' long sufferin' man," I tell him quiet. "Still, if ye do not stop the ass's bray of ye, the two of us will have trouble. Do ye understand?"

He goes into a fresh spasm of laughin', bendin' over an' huggin' his stomach with his arms. "The look on the stupid face of ye!"

I unsling the guitar from around me shoulder an' I swing it with a full an' easy grace. I have paid six dollars Mex for that guitar but I do not regret it. It catches this feller fair an' his head comes poppin' up through it like a gopher poppin' out of a hole in the ground.

"So," he says, "that's the way ye feel, is it?"

"That is the way I feel," I tell him.

WELL, we go to it, an' for the space of some ten minutes 'tis as pretty a little fight there in the Calle Santo Tomas as ye would care to watch. We are even matched; he is made a little the taller but I have a pound or two of the weight of him. He catches me with a right hand which jars me down to me heels an' then comes in fast, swingin' a left which is like a cleaver. I dive away from it, hittin' him at the knees an' the two of us go down into the dirt.

"Laugh now, ye big hyena!" I say, crammin' his face down hard.

He gets a scissors around me body but I go over backwards, breakin' it an' gettin' his boot into me teeth at the same time. I am conscious that there is a hell of a fuss goin' on around us there in the street—doors are openin' an' people are runnin' out screechin': "Fight! Fight! *Los* terrible *Americanos!*" something scandalous.

"Little yellow bird!" this feller says between pants.

I split his lip with a right hook, but I see

that he is still laughin'. Then he closes one of my eyes with a snappy one-two an' down we go again. I am just twistin' around a little to get a hammer-lock, so that I can break his arm, when I hear the sound of boots comin' along fast in the dirt.

"Poleece! Poleece!"

I desist in me activities for a moment an' look. A squad of military police is roundin' the corner at the gallop an' bearin' down on the two of us fast. This sergint sees, too.

"Friend," he says, "it looks to me as though an armistice might be in order for the moment. 'Tis me suggestion that the two of us form an alliance for the purpose of dispersin' the forces of law an' order as represented by these Johns which are now approachin' the front of us. Later we can resume our own private argument."

Well, there is much to be said for the idea.

The squad comes along nice an' deploys somewhat so as to surround the two of us. I see that a tough lookin' corporil is in charge. He saunters up an' stands with his hands on his hips while he looks at me companion.

"So it is you again, is it, Sergint Macroom?"

"'Tis not the President of the United States," this Macroom tells him soft an' easy. "What do ye expect to do about it, friend Gallagher?"

This corporil smiles, about as friendly as a bucket full of hoptoads.

"Ye have been creatin' a riot an' an insurrection in the Calle Santo Tomas," he says, pleased. "Such conduct bein' prejudicial to good order an' military discipline, I am goin' to escort the two of ye to the hoosegow an' lock ye up."

"Oh, ye are?"

"I am. All right, men!"

I glance at Macroom out of the corner of me one good eye an' I see that he is grinnin' crooked. He sings a little ditty out of the corner of his mouth. It is a fightin' ditty in Manila in them days, especially when sung in the presence of the military police, so to speak.

"The Bridge of Spain will groan with pain,
When the M. P.'s march out to battle!"

Well, ye can get much the same result by tossin' a match into an open powder keg. These M.P.'s are big, tough men an' there is a considerable commotion there in the Calle Santo Tomas for the period of some minutes. Howsoever, me an' Sergint Macroom have a little the advantage, for we are already warmed up an' into the spirit of the thing. For a while we hold our own, but then the M.P.'s begin to get their second wind an' it is plain that the time has come to withdraw in good order.

"Let us counter-march, me friend," Sergint Macroom says to me low. "We will speak again with Corporil Gallagher—"

We beat a hasty retreat out of the Calle Santo Tomas an' go down a dark alley at the double. There is sounds of pursuit behind us but, havin' discarded the guitar, we are in light marchin' order an' keep ahead. There is another side street an' we turn into that—strange enough, we come presently to the back door of the Oriental Bar.

"Do ye execute a column left, friend," says Sergint Macroom. "We will outwit Gallagher an' his flatfoots by the superior intelligence of us, to say nothin' of wettin' our whistles at the same time."

So we go in fast, closin' the door behind us. There is a little room, empty, with a table an' maybe a half a dozen chairs an' a kerosine lamp which is smokin'. Macroom stands at the door for a minute, listenin'. He smiles crooked then, an' presently I hear the sound of boots stampin' on away down the alley outside.

"Corporil Gallagher is a good little man but not overly quick," Sergint Macroom says. "'Tis a fault that I have noted in him in campaign, so 'tis better that he employ his talents as an M. P. Do ye sit, friend."

CHAPTER 2

PEPE FERNANDO comes in then an' presently he goes out an' comes back with a bottle an' two glasses. Sergint Macroom fills them an' passes one across to me as the two of us sit. Pepe is reachin' for the bottle to take it away but the big man waves him off.

"Scat, ye brown heathen. Do ye not see that me an' me good friend here is thirsty? Leave the bottle be."

"But eet ees five peso, *señor*," Pepe says. "You mus' pay me thee five peso."

Sergint Macroom looks sorrowful an' shakes the red head of him.

"Presently, presently," he says. "Ye have a mercenary cast to the character of ye, Pepe, which grieves me horrid. Do ye now depart into the front room of your grog dispensary an' worry no more about it."

"Five peso, please," Pepe repeats stubborn.

Well, of late I have been havin' a bit of luck at the poker table an' it so happens that I have money this night. I reach into my pocket an' bring out a five peso note, passin' it across the table toward the little brown man. Pepe has almost got his fingers on it when Sergint Macroom picks it away neat.

"No, no, me friend," he says. "This is on Shamus Macroom. Laugh at ye in the Calle Santo Tomas, I may do—allow ye to pay for the first round of refreshments, I will not."

He turns to Pepe. "Me friend, when I say scat it is scat that I mean. Do ye now be on your way instanter."

Pepe goes, sad. "Eet ees now thee thirty pesos that you owe me, Sergeant," he says melancholy. "Pretty soon thee beezness she ees bus,' I'm theenk."

The door shuts behind him.

"To the red nose of ye," Sergint Macroom says, liftin' his glass an' pocketin' me five peso bill absent. " 'Tis Sergint Shamus Macroom of the infantry toastin' ye."

"Sergint Michael O'Hare, cavalry," I answer him back, liftin' me own glass.

"Cavalry, eh? A strange an' incomprehensible breed." Shamus Macroom murmurs. "Still, every man to his own poison, O'Hare. I dare say 'tis better than the quartermaster corps, at that."

Well, we drink an' then we drink again an' presently I begin to feel better. Of a sudden I realize that this Marguerita has been nothin' but an episode, so to speak, an' that the proper pastime for a man is fightin', with maybe a drop or two of good whiskey now an' then on the side.

'Tis after the third one that I perceive that this Shamus Macroom is a man after me own heart. A witty an' entertainin' man who has traveled here an' about an' who has seen the elephant an' heard the owl, so to speak. After a while Pepe brings us another bottle an' I pay for it, although I can see from the face of him that Shamus Macroom considered it a waste of good pesos.

Howsoever, he says friendly: "O'Hare, although ye are a simple little man, I find ye much to me likin'. 'Tis a shame that ye are not in the army, for it comes to the mind of me that ye would make a good soldier."

The same displeases me somewhat an' I say stiff: "I carry a chunk of Moro iron in the left leg of me, Sergint Macroom. I am thinkin' that the best that ye can show is bottle scars for the campaignin' that ye have done with the infantry."

Well, Shamus Macroom eyes me thoughtful for a minute. Then he puts down his glass an' unbuttons his shirt slow—he pulls it back so that I can see the naked chest of him. The light is dim back there in the rear room of the Oriental Bar, but it is not so dim that I cannot see what I see.

I am an old man an' I have seen the marks of battle upon many men, yet, never before or since, have I seen a man battle-marked as is this Shamus Macroom. Long, clean cut scars which is white in the smoky light of the kerosene lamp.

"Bolo," Shamus Macroom says proud, buttonin' his shirt again. "Simeon Grueso an' his merry little *ladrones* gave me that down in Batangas a couple of years ago, O'Hare. They laid me on the ground an' chopped at me like I was a piece of firewood."

"Talk on," I say."

SHAMUS MACROOM fills his glass again. "There is little to tell, friend O'Hare. At the time there is a platoon of us at Pagbilao, which is a pleasant enough little *barrio* at that. Things are just active enough in the hills to be interestin' an' me an' the twenty-five men with me enjoy ourselves something scandalous. 'Tis this way, do ye see.

"There is a band of maybe one hundred of the little brown men who have their headquarters back in the hills at the time. They are commanded by one Colonel Juan Dalmacio, who is a fat little man of a cheerful disposition, although a good fighter. Mark ye, O'Hare, I have said that these were *insurrectos* an' not *ladrones*."

"It seems to me that a Filipino is a Filipino," I say. "Furthermore, 'tis me observation that most of 'em are rough."

"Well," Shamus Macroom tells me, "ye have done your fightin' in Mindanao an' maybe do not understand, so I will explain. Briefly speakin', a *ladrone* is mainly a robber an' an outlaw—given to buryin' people in ant hills an' similar unpleasant practices. He is such a man as would make a bonfire out of his old grandmother to read the evenin' paper by.

"Howsoever, it was not so with Colonel Juan Dalmacio's little brown *insurrectos*. They were what ye might call regular troops, organized an' disciplined proper an', accordin' to the lights of 'em, fightin' for their country. Good fighters, too—I have not met up with any since that it has been more pleasure to fight with.

"Well, like I have said, I enjoy the war the way we indulge in it down in Pagbilao at the time I'm speakin' of. We hear rumors now an' again of a big band of *ladrones* which is organizin' somewhere in the interior, but they give us no trouble an' so we give scant thought to 'em.

"Our job at the moment is to chase Colonel Juan Dalmacio an' his men, capturin' 'em when we catch them, takin' away their firearms an' sendin' them down to Lucena as prisoners of war all orderly an' proper. Any unnecessary blood-lettin' is frowned upon somewhat severe by both sides.

"It is in the middle of the hot season an' the *insurrectos* an' ourselves have got sort of an understandin' that we will confine our campaign to the cool of the day, leavin' all hands free to take a siesta in the afternoon. It was a great plan an' it worked like a clock, O'Hare."

"The thing sounds somewhat irregular to me," I observe dry, tippin' up the bottle again.

"On the contrary, it is a civilized way to make war," Shamus Macroom informs me, severe. "There are enough discomforts that a soldier must put up with without bein' shot in the middle of a hot afternoon. Down in Pagbilao we chased Colonel Juan Dalmacio an' his little brown *insurrectos* enthusiastic over the hills all mornin', but when noon came we knocked off prompt an' went home to lunch. Aye, O'Hare, them were pleasant times down there before this condemned Simeon Gruesco showed up on the scene."

"He would be the one that used ye for a choppin' block, Shamus Macroom?"

"The same. I will get to him presently. Well, there is only one place in Pagbilao where a man can get a decent drink an' I am there late one afternoon. It is a little place which is run by Colonel Juan Dalmacio. I—"

"Wait!" I interrupt, scandalized. "Are ye tellin' me that this Colonel Juan Delmacio, who is the number one boy of the *insurrectos* that ye are chasin', also is the proprietor of the grog dispensary in the town where ye are billeted?"

"Why not?" Shamus Macroom asks, unperturbed. "I told ye, did I not, that it was a civilized war that we are fightin'? Durin' the mornin' Colonel Juan Delmacio puts on his uniform—which is a pair of red pants an' a slouch hat—an' we chase him over the hills. In the afternoon, after siesta, he puts on an apron an' dispenses liquid refreshments—'tis a very satisfactory arrangement.

"Well, I am in there on the afternoon of which I am speakin'. I have a rum an' water in front of me an' I am feelin' good, for we have captured a couple of Colonel Juan's *insurrectos* that mornin', complete with Remingtons an' twenty rounds apiece. They are sittin' outside now waitin' to be sent down to Lucena.

" 'Juan,' I say, jokin', 'we will be gatherin' yourself in one of these fine mornings before long.'

"Colonel Juan wipes his forehead with a rag an' grins at me. Maybe I have said that he is a fat and good humored man.

"I take another sip of me rum. 'If ye do not stock better drinkin' liquor soon we will hang ye to a tree when we do catch ye, Colonel Juan,' I tell him. 'Such as this is a scandal an' a disgrace an' is fit only to melt out the bottom of kerosene cans with.'

"Well, I am about to heap more abuse upon him, so to speak, but I see something an' I stop sudden.

"A door opens at the back of the room an' a girl comes through. The light is some dim in there for it is gettin' along in the evenin', but it is not so dim that I cannot see that she is a beauty. She is the color of old ivory an' she has a red flower stuck in her hair."

SHAMUS MACROOM stops sudden an' reaches for the bottle again. His face looks a little old all of a sudden as he fills his glass full an' drains it. It is some minutes before he goes on, an' I have sense enough to keep quiet.

"She talks to Colonel Juan for a minute an' I sit there lookin' at her, for it is a long time since I have seen anything like her, O'Hare. She turns, then, to go out, but before she goes she gives me a long an' steady look. I know then that we will meet again or Shamus Macroom is not the man that I think he is.

" 'An' who would the colleen be, Colonel Juan?' I ask casual after she was gone.

" 'It is me brother's girl,' he tells me in effect. 'Her father has died recent an' she has come down from the hills to live in peace an' quiet for a while, such conditions bein' somewhat scarce in the interior at the moment, what with the *ladrones* an' all.'

" 'Ah,' I say, satisfied. 'It is plain to see that she is intelligent as well as good to look at. The interior is no place for the likes of her.'

Colonel Juan Delmacio shrugs his shoulders.

" 'Vairy bad,' he says sober. 'Thee *ladrones* vairy bad mans. You 'ave hear of thees Simeon Grueso, no?'

" 'A rumor here an' there,' I tell him. 'Not much that ye could put your finger on.'

"Colonel Juan Delmacio mops slow at his bar an' I can see that his fat face is some worried.

" 'He ees the bad mans,' he says again. 'Maybe he don't like wan fellow—he ees burn those fellow's feet een thee fire—vairy bad.'

" 'Well,' I tell him, 'cheer up, Colonel. You got the *Americanos* here to take care of ye—'tis not likely that this Simeon Grueso will dare give ye trouble.'

"Colonel Juan shakes his head dolorous. 'He ees got maybe wan t'ousand mens—those wan. Vairy bad.'

"He speaks the truth, as I find out later."

Shamus Macroom takes a black hod out of his pocket an' packs it slow, then sets there with it between his teeth, not botherin' to light it. I note that the good humor has not yet come back into his face.

"Well," he says, "to make a long story short I find out that her name is Felicia, an' in the days that follows, I gets to know her well, O'Hare." Shamus Macroom stops again an' looks off across the room for a long time. "Aye," he goes on finally, "I knew her well, an' I have not known a woman before or since—white or black—who could hold a candle to her.

"It is one evening when the two of us are sittin' in the dusk an' watchin' the moon come up that I feel her shiver a little in me arms.

" 'My Shamus. I mus' go back to thee hills.'

" 'Do ye not be silly,' I say.

" 'You 'ave heard of Simeon Grueso, *querido?*'

" 'Aye, I have heard of him,' I reply absent, for I am more interested in watchin' the shine of the moonlight on the black hair of her.

"Well, I feel her shiver again. 'He has sent me thee word, Shamus. He has said that I mus' come back to heem.'

" 'What!'

" 'It is that you do not understan',' she says an' her voice is low an' sad. 'Simeon Grueso hates thee *Americanos,* an' he has heard of thee an' me. I mus' go, else harm will come to you.'

" 'Nonsense,' I say to her, laughin' unconcerned. 'Do ye trouble the pretty head of ye no more about it. In maybe ten days now me relief will come—then I will take ye back to Manila where ye will be a great lady.' "

Shamus Macroom fills his glass again an' tips it down. He lights a match, then, an' holds it above the bowl of his pipe but I notice that he does not set the baccy alight an' the match burns down till it scorches his fingers. He drops it on the floor, not seemin' to notice.

He goes on bitter after a minute: "Well, it was a convincin' tongue that I had an' presently I convince her that no harm will come down upon the two of us out of the hills. She wanted to believe, O'Hare. I meant it, God help me—but I did not know the devil that lay in this Simeon Grueso.

"It is in the mid-mornin', two days after, while we are out roundin' up Colonel Juan Delmacio's *insurrectos* as usual. We come into a little clearin' where there is a strip of cultivated ground an' a house set at one

edge of it. There is a half a dozen black birds hoppin' around the ground in front of that house an' they flap away as we come up.

" 'There is something wrong here, Sergint,' Corporil O'Mears tells me, but I have seen already an' the sight makes me a little sick to my stomach.

"It is Colonel Juan Delmacio which is layin' there. The manner of his dyin' is all too plain to see—a cruel, hard way for a man to die.

"Well, we bury him there an' we fire the volleys over his grave, for he has been a brave an' cheerful little man an' a foeman for whom we have had res' ect. It is when I am turnin' away from the grave of him that I see something that I have not seen before. It is a scrap of dirty paper pinned to the house with a bit of thorn an' I take it down an' read. It says:

> Death to all *Americanos!* Death and torture to all who befriend *Americanos!*

"It is signed: 'Simeon Grueso.'

"For a minute the black anger has me over the thing that this sneakin' an' cowardly *ladrone* has done to Colonel Juan Delmacio. Then, sudden, I remember what Felicia has said to me back there in the dusk. Me blood is like ice in me veins, O'Hare, as I give the word an' the patrol starts back to Pagbilao.

"Well, she is gone, an' the same note is pinned to the house where Colonel Juan Delmacio had used to serve us rum an' water in the cool of the evening."

Shamus Macroom stops an' runs a hand through the red hair of him.

"Ye did not see her again, Sergint Macroom?" I ask finally.

HE LOOKS at me for a long minute an' I understand that he has not heard an' that he does not see me there at all. I reach for the bottle, though I know that I am a little drunk by now—it is better so, I think. It is better so if Shamus Macroom is drunk too, an' I push the bottle toward him.

"Drink up," I tell him.

"Aye," he says. "First, we will drink, O'Hare. Then we will find Corporil Gallagher an' I will close the other eye of him. 'Tis a great comfort what drinkin' an' fightin' can be to a man upon occasion."

"Ye did not see her again," I ask him soft once more, for I sense that the black dog has come upon him an' it is better that he shake it off. Talkin' will sometimes comfort a man.

"I saw her again," he tells me. "Me relief comes in due course, but I do not go back to Manila, stayin' on there at Pagbilao instead. Howsoever, the old easy days is gone now, for Simeon Grueso, an' his *ladrones* have come down out of the hills an' are lootin' an' burnin' an' killing in a manner that would turn the blood of ye to cold water. Bad men, as Colonel Juan Delmacio has once told me.

"Well, I will not bore ye with all that went on, but get to Simeon Grueso. It is late in the year an' I am on a scout into the interior with three men. The thing has been well planned, for we walk neat into an ambush an' the *ladrones* take the four of us. We have no chance; they swarm over us sudden like a wave swarms over a beach. The three with me go down under the bolos in the first rush; for myself, I am not hurt beyond bein' knocked silly by a clout on the head with the flat of a bolo. Later I find out that there is a reason for that.

"When I come to I see that I am lyin' on the ground bound up like a pig for the market. It is close to dark, but in between the streams of shootin' stars which trouble me eyes some, I see that I am in a *barrio*, for there are houses around me. I try to twist about to see better an' then somebody kicks me hard in the ribs.

" '*Americano* peeg!' a voice says.

"It is a squat an' ugly man who is standin' over me an' lookin' down. His hair has been cut short so that it stands up in little bristles an' his face is crisscrossed with scars. At the minute I wish that I was back in Brooklyn.

" '*Americano* peeg!' he says again for he is not a man of many words. 'So you 'ave fall into thee trap wheech Simeon Grueso 'have feex for you, eh?'

"He sings out something an' presently half a dozen little brown men come up at the trot. They carry bolos swingin' at the sides of them an' I figure that they are goin' to polish off Shamus Macroom right then an' there. Howsoever, Simeon Grueso has other plans.

" '*Americano*,' he says nasty, 'Simeon Grueso weel show you thee leetle bed that

he has now feex for you, eh? Vairy fine!'

" 'Fine,' I tell him hearty. 'A good night's sleep is just what I need, for it has been a tryin' day. I thank you kindly for your hospitality. Do ye come down to Pagbilao sometime an' I will see to it that ye are hanged upon a tree.'

"He grunts to his ugly henchmen which has gathered around. They pick me up as if I am the Yule log an' they lug me down the street an' out into a little clearin' which has been chopped into the jungle. There is just enough light so that I can see as they stand me on me feet.

" '*Americano* peeg', Simeon Grueso says, stickin' his ugly face close up into me own, 'I show you thee vairy nice bed, eh?' He waves his hand. 'You take thee look, no?'

"Well, I look. Maybe a half a dozen feet in front of me there is an ant hill—a big one, standin' maybe two-three feet above the ground. It is too dark to see the ants but I know that they are there—big red fellers."

SHAMUS MACROOM stops for a minute an' lights his pipe. Some of the tightness has gone out of his face as he talks about himself an' that gives me a good measure of the man. A tough one, an' scared of nothin' that walks on the earth or swims in the sea. Me liking for him grows.

He goes on. "While I am standin' there I am reminded of a school teacher I once had. She had a poem which went something like this, as I remember:

"The little ant he works all day,
An' never, never stops to play.
Runnin' about on legs so fleet,
He gathers in good things to eat.

" 'Tis no doubt a pretty sentiment, but it leaves me cold at the moment. Howsoever, me pride will not let me show this Simeon Grueso an' his dirty brown *ladrones* that I am perturbed.

" 'Well, do ye get on with the business,' I say, 'for I have no wish to be in the company of ye any longer than I can help. If any of me friends was to see me it would be me social undoin'.'

"He smirks at me nasty. 'Ah,' he says, '*mañana* we weel make thee beeg fiesta an' then we weel put heem een hees bed, no? Eet weel be so vairy fonnee to watch thee leetle ant when she ees try to get thee honey een his mouth. Yess.'

"So they take me back an' they dump me down on the dirt floor in one of the houses, still leavin' me tied up like a Christmas package. I suppose that they put a guard at the door, but I am alone in this room as far as I can tell in the dyin' light.

"Well, O'Hare, it is a sick an' scared man that I am—I do not mind admittin' it to ye. I have no doubt but that the *ladrone* will carry out the thing that he has promised an' I remember the day that we find what has been Joey Murphy—he, too, has been treated so.

"Time creeps along slow but nobody comes into the hut, though I can hear voices now an' again an' feet paddin' by in the dust outside. Me tongue is like a sponge in the mouth of me an' me head is one big ache. Howsoever, in spite of it, I must doze for a bit. Then I wake again. Everything is quiet now an' from the cool of the air I guess that it is past midnight. I try again to wiggle me hands loose, but I know that it is no use, for the feelin' has gone out of me fingers from the tightness of the ropes.

"Then, sudden, I hear a faint rustle an' I know that there is somebody in the hut with me. I lay quiet—there is nothin' else that I can do. Then a voice whispers into me ear.

" 'Shamus Macroom,' it says.

"I would have known that voice in hell, O'Hare. It is Felicia. Her fingers are slippin' soft down across me wrists.

" 'Girl!' I says.

" 'Hush,' she whispers. 'We must be careful, my Shamus. They sleep lightly.'

"A knife point pricks into me bare arm an' I can feel the cool of the blade slidin' down. The ropes at me wrists jerk a little an' then come loose. A minute later me ankles are free.

" 'Come,' she says. 'We must not talk.'

"Her lips brush across me face for a second an' then she is helpin' me to me feet. I can scarce stand, an' pains like hot irons torture me feet as the blood seeps back into 'em slow.

" 'Come,' Felicia says to me again.

"She lends me her shoulder to lean upon an' leads me, stumblin' awkward, to the back of the hut. The grass wall has been cut away here a little an' she helps me through the hole an' presently I am out in the starlight. The wind is cool an' good an'

I breathe deep of it, for I have not expected to breathe it free again.

" 'We mus' hurry, my Shamus,' she whispers close to me ear. 'Simeon weel be like thee crazee one w'en he finds thees theeng that I 'ave done.'

"Well, we go cautious among the houses, though I am stumblin' like a man that is drunk—me feet will not behave an' I have no more use of me hands than has an armless man. Then we set foot on a trail which leads into the jungle.

"O'Hare, I have known from the first that it cannot be.

"We have been on the trail maybe five minutes when I hear all hell bust loose back there in the *barrio*—an unpleasant sound. I try to go faster, but me feet have no more feelin' than chunks of wood. It is no good.

"By the sound of them I know that the *ladrones* have found our tracks in the trail an' it is a matter of minutes before they come upon us. I stop.

" 'Darlin',' I say, 'it is grateful I am for the thing that you have done. Now ye must do one thing more for me.'

" 'Yes, my Shamus?'

" 'Ye must give me the knife. Then ye must go—an' quickly, for it is not good that this Simeon Grueso find ye here. Do ye kiss me first.'

"She is quiet for a long minute an' I wonder if she has not heard. Behind us Simeon Grueso's *ladrones* are givin' tongue loud on the trail—not far behind at that.

" 'I weel go with ye, Shamus,' she says sober. 'Whereever you go, there I will go, too.'

"Well, I try to drive her away, but it is no good, for she will not go. So the two of us slip into the jungle an' crouch down there in the creepers a little off the trail. We hear the *ladrones* go hellin' by, but I know that they will not be fooled for long an' I am right. Presently they come back, sniffin' like dogs on a scent.

"It is close to dawn when they find us, O'Hare." Shamus Macroom stops an' tips the bottle into his glass. I see that the old lines have come back into his face. "I remember it well—it is close to dawn."

I SIT there turnin' me empty glass around an' around in me fingers. Outside, in the front room of the Oriental Bar, there is hilarity, but I do not feel hilarious here, underneath the flickerin' kerosine lamp. Shamus Macroom goes on:

"Me hands are not much good to me but I have the knife an' I account for several of 'em—I do not know how many—before they get to me with their bolos. Then I go down an' they swarm across, hackin' as though they are choppin' their way through the jungle. It may be that there are so many of 'em that they get in each other's way so that they cannot swing free, for I am still alive when they leave me there.

"Well, O'Hare, man is a funny animal an' hard to kill, for I do not die. It is maybe noon when a patrol from the company comes along the trail an' somehow I drag meself out. They bind me up an', after they have burned the *barrio* up ahead, they take me back to Pagbilao. After a while I get well."

"The girl?" I ask although I am afraid to find out.

Shamus Macroom looks at me an' his face is drawn an' haggard. "They found her back in the *barrio* which they burned, O'Hare. She was dead—that devil had put her to the torture for helpin' me to escape."

Shamus Macroom puts down his glass slow an' deliberate an' there is a black hardness to his eyes. "I will find Simeon Grueso if he still lives, O'Hare. I will exact me own price from him for the thing that he has done."

Shamus Macroom slouches down in his chair, starin' at the wall across from him, an' I know that he is back down in Batangas. It is not good. What has been done has been done an' there is naught that will change it now. So I hammer on the table an' presently Pepe Fernando put the head of him in through the door.

"Do ye bring us another bottle, ye brown monkey!" I yell at him.

He comes back an' I fill up the glasses once again. I am not sorry to do so, for the thing that I have heard has not been a pleasant one.

"We will have another drink, Shamus Macroom," I say. "Then we will go out into the night an' see what the city has in the way of diversions an' dissipations."

Shamus Macroom rouses himself, shakin' the big shoulders of him, an' grinnin' a little crooked, although there is still a tightness to the lips of him.

"It is a good little man that ye are,

Michael O'Hare," he says to me. "Ye have listened patient an' I am grateful for it. 'Tis not often that the thing comes back black upon me."

He lifts his glass an' drinks.

"There is virtue in the idea which ye have propounded," he says. "We will therefore sally forth an' descend upon Manila in search of gayety an' amusement. To the good health of ye once again, Michael O'Hare."

I am aware sudden that there is something special goin' on out in the front room of the Oriental Bar. The noise has quieted an' I can hear the sound of many heavy-booted feet scrapin' across the floor.

Shamus Macroom looks interested an' goes across to open the door a crack an' listen. Then he closes it again an' turns back to me, grinnin'.

" 'Tis that thus-an'-so Pepe," he says cheerful. "He has not been able to forget about the five pesos that I owe him. Corporil Gallagher an' his merry little men are now descendin' upon us in force, O'Hare."

"Well an' good," I say, for the liquor has dissolved the depression which has been upon me. Anyway, it is not good for a soldier to reflect over long on what has gone past—to take care of the present is enough, I have found. "Well an' good. We will descend upon this Corporil Gallagher like an army with banners, so to speak, an' we will discommode him considerable."

"Easy, easy," Shamus Macroom says soft, paddin' across the room to the back door. "It comes to me mind that the evenin' is yet young an' it would be a pity to spend it in the guardhouse. There is still plenty of time to attend to Corporil Gallagher. Howsoever, for the present we shall simulate the shadows of the night an' steal away quiet, as the poet says, goin' out by the back door as Gallagher comes in the front."

SO WE go outside into the alley again. We go along for maybe a hundred yards an' then Shamus Macroom slams into something in the dark. There is a terrible clatter an' bangin', to say nothin' of some feller who starts to orate Spanish at us in a loud tone of voice. Me eyes have got accustomed to the dark some by now an' I see that it is a *carrometa*—which same is a two-wheeled cart with one of them undersized Filipino ponies hitched to it—that we have run into.

"Hush, ye noisy Dago!" Shamus Macroom says in a whisper which would wake a man from a sound sleep a hundred yards away. "Can ye not see that we wish to move quiet, attractin' no undue attention?"

"But *señor,*" this voice protests, "eet ees that you 'ave upset thee bucket wheech ees hol' thee food for thee leetle Jose an' Pedro an' Maria an' Christopher Colombo. Now those one weel not 'ave thee breakfas'."

I recognize the voice then. It is old Vespacian, who lives out Cavite way an' who comes to town in the evenin' to collect the scraps from the Oriental Bar an' similar places of refreshment. Shamus Macroom turns to me.

" 'Tis a clumsy ox that I am, O'Hare," he says contrite. "I have took the bread out of the mouths of babes an' sucklings with the great feet of me. Would ye be havin' five pesos about ye?"

"What is this about babes an' sucklings?" I ask.

"Do not quibble, O'Hare. Ye have heard the man name them."

"Sucklings, maybe," I tell him. " 'Tis old Vespacian's pigs that ye have been grieving for."

"*Si, si,*" old Vespacian puts in. "Thee lettle peeg, no? You should see heem, *señor*. She are so cute."

"Pigs, eh?" this Shamus Macroom says thoughtful. He turns dignified to me. "O'Hare, it is a wicked an' wasteful life that the two of us have been pursuin' an' it is grateful that I am that this good man here has come to show us the error of our ways. We will forsake the fleshpots this night. Instead, we will seek the simple life, so to speak. We will go out an' look at the pigs."

Well, as I have said, the two of us have partaken of a nip or two an' the night air is exhilaratin', so presently we are sittin' in the back of old Vespacian's *carrometa*. The old man is sayin' his prayers in Spanish, but at Shamus Macroom's urgin' he pokes the pony into a trot an' we proceed down the alley.

He has brought along the fresh bottle which I have purchased back in the Oriental Bar an' the two of us sample it. After a minute a thought strikes Shamus Ma-

croom an' he taps old Vespacian on the shoulder.

" 'Tis a long an' tiresome day's work that ye have done, no doubt," he says. "Do ye have a drink, my friend. 'Tis a special brew which I have found to be good for ailments rangin' all the way from fallin' hair to housemaid's knee."

Well, old Vespacian, bein' on the reprobate side anyway, is nothin' loath. So the three of us proceed along, marchin' in easy stages, an' beginnin' to enjoy the evenin' considerable. The moon is beginnin' to come up now—one of them big Philippine moons which lights up things wonderful.

"There is one thing missin'," Shamus Macroom says after a while. " 'Tis the custom in the infantry to sing upon occasion. Can ye sing, O'Hare?"

"Did ye not hear me back there in the Calle Santo Tomas?" I say.

"I had forgotten," Macroom tells me apologetic. "At the moment I do not remember the song. Still, it is me recollection that it would have put Jenny Lind herself to shame."

So the three of us sing, such bein' a pleasant enough way to pass the time while we are goin' to see old Vespacian's pigs. We do not sing too loud at first, Shamus Macroom cautionin' us that Corporil Gallagher is likely to be still about an' maybe will not understand that we have forsook the mistaken practices which we have indulged in earlier, an' are now respectable citizens.

WE TURN into the Calle Concepcion, which is a wide street with a light here an' there Howsoever, the moon is well up by now so that we have no trouble seein' where we are goin'. Old Vespacian pokes his pony into a trot an' Shamus Macroom an' meself launch into *There'll Be a Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight,* which is popular at the time an' has a very pretty sentiment. Old Vespacian is enjoyin' himself, too; he does not know the song but he sings one in Spanish an' the two blend in nice together.

We are approachin' a buildin' which I recognize as the Elite Café, when Shamus Macroom says, "A lovely song, indeed, O'Hare. Howsoever, there is another for which I have always had a great fondness."

Shamus Macroom gets to his big feet an' stands there swayin' back an' forth, for the street is rough an' the *carrometa* jounces around considerable. He puts his hand on the chest of him an' sings:

"Oh, the Bridge of Spain will groan with pain,
When the M.P.'s march out to battle!"

Well, there is something familiar about the song which Shamus Macroom is bellowin' at the top of his voice, but me attention has been diverted by the activities which is goin' on in front of the Elite Café. There is a crowd gathered there an' considerable hubbub takin' place.

It is Corporil Gallagher. He is gallopin' out grim with his merry men behind him, and sings out nasty: "Halt! I see ye, Sergint Macroom. Do ye come down off that lumber wagon immediate. The guardhouse has been waitin' overlong for ye!"

"I was afraid that me friend Gallagher would misunderstand the motives of us," Shamus Macroom says sorrowful.

He leans forward an' takes the whip out of old Vespacian's hand an' whacks the Filipino pony smart. This pony has been trottin' along all nice an' easy, thinkin' about nothin' in particular, an' the whip awakens him rude. He puts on a burst of speed sudden which is wonderful to see, an' we go by Corporil Gallagher in a cloud of dust.

Well, to make a long story short, this Corporil Gallagher is not as dumb as ye would judge from the looks of him. There is another *carrometa* standin' there in front of the Elite Café an' Gallagher, together with two of his men, pile into it, an' take off after us down the Calle Concepcion. Shamus Macroom looks back.

"Well," he says very pleased, "so it is a race. 'Tis a nice night for it. Me brown friend, do ye see if ye cannot coax another knot or two of speed out of yon small beastie."

Old Vespacian has got into the spirit of the thing by now. He bounces up an' down on his seat, wavin' his arms an' shoutin' at his horse an' generally creatin' the sort of disturbance which is peculiar to dog fights or Democratic conventions. We go faster, but it is apparent, after a little, that old Vespacian's entry is some outclassed. Corporil

Gallagher is overhaulin' us at a rate which is scandalous.

Shamus Macroom takes a small nip from the bottle an' estimates the situation. Then he climbs up into the front seat with old Vespacian

"Do ye let me try me hand," he says.

WELL, it is an exhilaratin' experience, as I look back at it. The mouth of the Calle Rebosa looms sudden ahead of us in the moonlight an' Shamus Macroom braces his feet an' swings hard on the reins.

"By the left flank—ho!"

The Filipino pony, bein' of a bad disposition an' more than a little put out by the whole business, turns on a dime an' we go into the Calle Rebosa on two wheels. We lose old Vespacian. He has not been expectin' the maneuver an' he skates off the seat into the dirt, howlin' Spanish curses as he goes.

"Siggy, ye broom-tailed quadruped!" Shamus Macroom says an' we siggy.

Howsoever, this Corporil Gallagher is not to be fooled. He turns into the Calle Rebosa likewise, though at a slightly slower pace, an' he begins to creep up on us again. We are travelin' at a good clip now an' the *carrometa* is rockin' an' swayin' like a ship in a heavy sea.

"Halt!" Corporil Gallagher yells an' it is plain to see that he is some irritated. "Halt, ye condemned thus-an'-so's! I will beat ye to death with me club, otherwise."

Shamus Macroom looks back over his shoulder. "Halt, is it?" he asks sarcastic. "Do ye hang tight, O'Hare, to the chariot. We will be showin' Corporil Gallagher how this Ben Hur wins his race in the Circus Maximus."

Well, Shamus Macroom refreshes himself from the bottle an' then he stands up on the seat with the reins flyin' loose in his hands. He speaks to that horse in the same way that Saint Patrick, hiven rest him, once spoke to the snakes in County Clare. It may be that the horse has got a touch of snake in him for he accelerates himself more than somewhat an' we pull away a bit.

It ends sudden, howsoever.

Shamus Macroom has been intent, so to speak, upon his chauffeurin' an' has not been keepin' a close eye upon the road ahead. The Calle Rebosa ends in a big wall in which there is a gate; it is too late to stop an' so we go through, missin' a gate post maybe by the width of your little finger. We are on a driveway which runs up to curve around in front of a big house maybe two hundred yards away; there is flower beds all around.

"O'Hare," Shamus Macroom says over his shoulder, "we are in the wrong pew."

"We are," I agree. I am beginnin' to think that maybe it is better if I have stayed in Mindanao.

"There is nothin' to do but to negotiate the turn," Shamus Macroom yells. "Then we can go out again in the way in which we come in."

We do not make it.

There are people all dressed up in white clothes sittin' on the veranda of the house, I see Then me line of sight is upset, so to speak. The *carrometa* wheels can get no purchase in the loose gravel. We skid in a way that is scandalous an' then I am flyin' through the air with me mouth open while I flap me arms an' glide down to a landin' in a flower bed.

I sit up presently an' I look just in time to see old Vespacian's *carrometa* disappearin' through the gate again. Howsoever, I am not interested at the moment. Me attention is distracted by sulphurous language which a fat party in a white coat is dischargin' from the veranda in short bursts. Shamus Macroom is on his hands an' knees on the walk, lookin' up.

"Good God!" he says distinct. " 'Tis the gineral, himself—old McKenzie!"

Well, to make a long story short, Corporil Gallagher an' his M.P.'s arrive then an' that is how I come to go down into Batangas with Sergint Shamus Macroom.

CHAPTER 3

I WAKE up the next mornin' with a taste in me mouth, which is somewhat on the furry side. Me head hurts something scandalous an' I have sundry other aches an' pains besides. I am layin' on a hard cot, an' from the barred shadows which is across the floor, I know that I am in the guardhouse. Presently I find that I am able to lift me head.

Shamus Macroom is on a similar cot across the way. I think that I have never

seen a fouler sight. The red hair of him is standin' on end. His face looks as though the Russian army has tramped across it in their hobnailed boots, an' his uniform is in a state of considerable disrepair He sits up after a little an' looks at me

"Tch! Tch!" he says. "The sight of ye on a Thursday mornin' is a strain upon the eyes. Sergint O'Hare."

"Ye are nothin' soothing to look at yourself." I wish that I have stayed in Mindanao, where there is a measure of peace an' security an' a man is not exposed to such menaces as Sergint Shamus Macroom.

He feels of his head, touchin' it with the tips of his fingers

"It must be that I ate something last night which did not set well with me stomach," he says thoughtful. " 'Tis a bit of a headache that I have this morning."

"Ye will have a worse one presently," I tell him. "Maybe ye do not remember assaultin' a major general upon his own front porch last night?"

"Tch! Tch!" he says regretful. "Well, me old mother always said I was a bit hasty. Howsoever, it is probable that old McKenzie will take it all in fun."

" 'Tis probable that old McKenzie will have the two of us shot against a wall."

"Let him get on with it, then," Shamus Macroom says in a hollow voice. "Grave would be a great comfort to me at the moment."

I am about to upbraid him further when I hear voices an' then boot heels come poundin' down the hallway outside the door. The corporil of the guard is unlockin' the cell an', behind him, I see there is an officer.

I get to me feet somehow, as does Sergint Macroom, as this officer comes into the cell.

He pays no attention to me but walks across to stand in front of me cellmate. He is a captain, I see, a big man with a black head an' a grand pair of shoulders to him. There is the mark of the Irish about him an' that comforts me a little.

"Sergint Macroom!" he says.

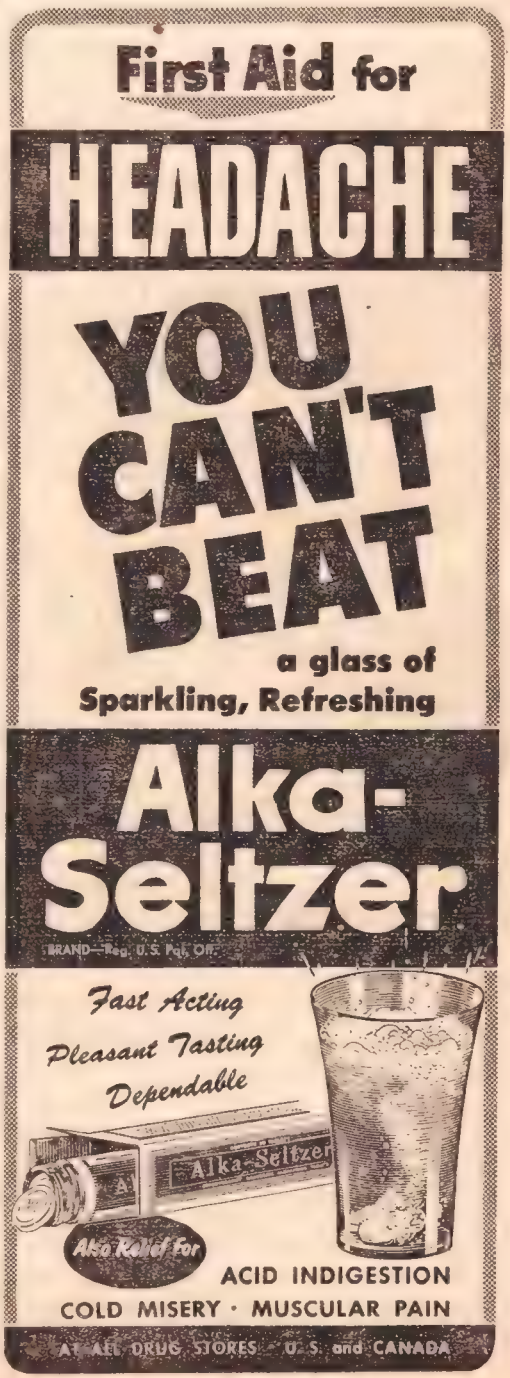
"Yes, sir."

"What devil's holiday is this that ye have indulged yourself in this time?"

"Sir—" Shamus Macroom begins.

"Quiet!" this captain tells him. "I will do the talkin' for the minute, Sergint Macroom! Ye will do the listenin'!"

Well, I have been in the army for a long time an' I have heard many a soldier dressed down, but I have not heard one take a tongue lashin' such as Sergint Shamus Macroom took that day. 'Tis a grand vocabulary that this Cap'n Murphy—for such I



learned his name to be—had. He speaks for ten minutes straight an' he does not repeat himself once.

Shamus Macroom stands there an' takes it, the face of him sheepish, for he knows that he has it all comin' to him an' then some more. It is a funny thing, but I can see by the look of Shamus Macroom that he thinks this Cap'n Murphy is gold an' rubies even while he is nailin' him to a cross.

"'Tis not three weeks gone that I have extricated ye from the guard house last time, Sergint Macroom," he concludes. "I have a good notion to leave ye here an' let them hang ye to a tree as ye so richly deserve."

"Yes, sir," Shamus Macroom says sorrowful, though he knows well that the captain will not do such.

"Not only should I leave ye but I should bust ye to the grade of private an' drum ye out of the outfit. I would do that, too, did I not need every man for the expedition which we are embarkin' upon tonight."

SHAMUS MACROOM'S chin, which has been restin' heavy on his wishbone, comes up sudden. "The cap'n would not be meanin' that we are goin' back to Batangas?"

"He would not," Cap'n Murphy answers him grim. "We are goin' to Samar where the *katipunan* has flared up again. There is a new Pope down there, a feller calls himself Papa Grueso, who has gathered him maybe a thousand bolo men."

Shamus Macroom looks up an' I see that his lips are thin. "Ye would not be knowin' whether or not this Papa Grueso's first name is Simeon, would ye, Cap'n?"

"I would an' it is," Cap'n Murphy says. He looks at Sergint Macroom curious. "Ye know of him?"

"I know of him," Shamus Macroom answers.

Well, it is a funny thing how a man can change sudden. Not five minutes gone, Sergint Macroom has been standin' there, nothin' but an untidy man with a red eye an' a hangover to him. 'Tis maybe an illusion, but it seems to me that the slackness has gone out of his face, leavin' it lean an' hard to match the hardness of his eye.

"We will be movin' soon, sir?" he asks quiet.

"We board the Coast Guard cutter *Mindoro* come eight o'clock tonight, Sergint. I have arranged for the release of ye. Do ye now get out an' be about what needs to be done."

Shamus Macroom salutes an' is about to turn to the door when his eye lights on me, standin' there at attention with me thumbs along the seams of me trousers. He turns back to Cap'n Murphy.

"Sir," he says, "it is Sergint O'Hare, cavalry, who is standin' over there. He an' I are friends, in a manner of speakin' an' I would not like to leave him here to suffer alone for the joint peccadillos which the two of us have perpetrated last night. Cannot the cap'n arrange for the release of him also?"

Well this Cap'n Murphy turns around an' looks at me for a long minute. He has got a hard eye, but I see in him the type of man that I can respect an' get along with pretty well.

"What is your regimint, Sergint O'Hare?" he asks in a tone of voice which would snap the top off of a beer bottle.

I tell him an' explain that I am in Manila on sick furlough. He says that I do not look sick, barrin' the various cuts an' contusions which I have received in the recent Calle Santo Tomas action. So I explain further that I have been recuperatin' from a hammered iron slug which the Moros have give me to remember 'em by. His eye softens a little at that.

"Moros, eh? They are good little fightin' men an' I have a respect for 'em," he tells me. "Your furlough still has a month to run?"

"Yes, sir," I tell him, wonderin' what he's up to.

"Well," he says, grinnin' a little, "'tis a highly irregular proceedin' an' probably contrary to more of the rules an' regulations of war than ye could stuff into a gunny bag. Howsoever, a soldier is a soldier, whether it be in Mindanao or in Samar, so I will take ye to Llorente with me. Such is better than leavin' ye here to be shot against a wall by old Fuddy Feathers."

I agree whole-hearted an' starts to give him me thanks but he waves 'em away with his hand.

"It will be a vacation in a manner of

speakin'," he says, "for 'tis probable that it will not be much of a campaign—say three weeks at the outside. Now do the both of ye be upon your way."

Well, he is wrong about the campaign, for it is a long an' bitter one an' that regimint does not again see Manila for more than a year. Cap'n Murphy, himself, does not see Manila again at all—but that is another story.

WE ARE at Llorente for three-four days gettin' shook down an' then we strike back into the hills. A *pulajan* deserter has come in with the word that Simeon Grueso is concentratin' at a place called Igcagona in the interior. This feller says that recruits are still comin' in and that the Pope will not be ready for maybe a week an' is hopin' that we will remain quiet durin' that time. That bein' the case, Cap'n Murphy decides to strike him sudden an' hard.

I find that this Samar is a harsh an' a bitter land. It is all up and down, so to speak, bein' filled with deep gorges an' mountains which go straight up. Daylight never gets into the jungles, the same which is filled with nasty lookin' snakes an' leeches the size of a man's thumb, which turn the blood of you cold when they fasten onto you. At night the *boudjons*—which is native drums—talk constant from the hills. It is an unpleasant country.

Well, we move out at daybreak one mornin', followin' a dim trail which the deserter has showed us. Not much of interest happens in them first two days, except that one Private Schmidt runs into a spear which has been planted in the jungle an' is removed permanent from a world of care an' trouble.

The night of the second day we camp in a little flat where two rivers come together. The trail we have been followin' has been gettin' broader an' deeper as we get back into the interior. Here it forks, one branch leadin' away to the right up one of the rivers. After we make camp Cap'n Murphy sends for Shamus Macroom. I go along.

The cap'n is squattin' in the dirt with a map spread out on the ground before him. He looks up as Sergint Macroom an' me salute.

"Come tomorrow mornin' ye will go on a scout, Sergint," he says. "Take along a squad an' one of the Macabebes—Corporil Bustabo is a good man."

"Yes, sir."

Cap'n Murphy points to the map—which is little more than a rough sketch. "Accordin' to the map, Sergint, the trail which branches off to the right here runs up the river a matter of some ten miles; then it swings back to the right again an' crosses the ridge to drop back down into the main valley."

Shamus Macroom stuffs tobacco into his pipe an' squints at the map.

"Yes, sir," he says.

"Ye will move out before daylight, takin' care that ye are not seen, an' follow that trail. By hard marchin' ye should rejoin the main body in the valley by tomorrow night."

"Yes, sir," Sergint Macroom says. "Has the cap'n got any special instructions?"

Cap'n Murphy rubs a hand across the bristles on his chin an' then folds up the map.

"Sergint," he says, "we have been marchin' for two days now but we have not seen hide nor hair of a native. 'Tis queer an' I do not like it."

Shamus Macroom nods, silent.

"It comes to me mind that this Pope Grueso is cookin' up some deviltry. It is not hard for him to keep out of the way of the column, for a hundred men make considerable noise when they march. Howsoever, he may not be expectin' a small patrol which will move swift an' quiet up this river to the right—the same bein' the Orasio, accordin' to the map. Ye will avoid fightin', but ye will bring in prisoners for questioning if it happens that ye run onto any. Have ye any questions?"

"No, sir," Shamus Macroom says. "The cap'n does not think that the big battle will come off tomorrow? It is hatin' to miss it that I would be."

"Igcagona is still a good two days' march away," Cap'n Murphy says. "There will be no battle until we get to there."

WELL, it is close to noon the next day an' we have been marchin' for eight hours. We have seen nothin' of the *pulajans*, though off an' on, durin' the morning, we have heard the *boudjons* goin'. Like

the map shows, the trail swings off to the left, leavin' the river an' beginning to climb toward the big hogback which separates the two streams. Shamus Macroom halts us an' we eat our lunch at the lower end of a little plateau which is bare of the jungle an' filled with *coogan* grass.

"'Tis thinkin', I am, that your *pulajans* are a harmless little people after all," I say to Shamus Macroom. "They appear to be more given to plantin' spears an' keepin' themselves well hid than they do to fightin'. Take a Moro, now—"

I do not finish.

Shamus has posted a sentry on the trail, but we cannot see him for the tall grass. We hear him, though. He screeches once an' then his screech dies away in a gurgle which prickles up the hair along me spine.

Corporil Bustabo sings out shrill: *"Pulajan!"* an' grabs for his shotgun.

I hear it then, an' I tell you frank that I do not care to hear that sound again as long as I live. First it is the *slap-thud* of bare feet poundin' down the trail; then it is a high-pitched scream.

"Tad-tad! Tad-tad!"

"Chop! Chop!" is the meanin' of it an' I learn that those ain't idle words. I see 'em then—maybe half a hundred red-shirted bolomen bearin' down on us at the run. It is not a pleasant sight.

Shamus Macroom has posted his men well an' the Krags start speakin' steady. Even so it is touch an' go there for a longer time than I like to think of. Personally, I have me hands full. A *pulajan* comes at me from the side while I am tryin' to reload an', as I see the wicked light shine down his bolo, I think that Michael O'Hare is about to figure prominent in the casualty lists tomorrow. Howsoever, Shamus Macroom takes the man on his bayonet an' me head settles back onto me shoulders once more.

There is a hell of a lot of noise goin' on, but eight men with Krags, usin' them cool an' easy, can do a lot of execution. The *pulajans* cannot stand it an' presently they break an' retire, disappearin' into the tall grass as quiet as they have come. We reload an' take stock of the situation.

Private Schmidt, a brother of the one who has walked into the spear earlier, is dead, split to the middle by a bolo swing. Private O'Halleran is dead, likewise, as is Private Thurston, the sentry. The rest of us are scratched up some, but have still got all of our arms an' legs. Out in front I estimate that there is maybe twenty *pulajans* piled up like cordwood, where the steel jackets of the Krags has caught 'em.

Well, we sort 'em out cautious an' we find one who is still alive, though he has got a bullet through his middle an' it is plain that he is not goin' to be with us long. He is an officer of some kind an' we bring him in.

Shamus Macroom props him up against a rock an' feeds him a little whiskey out of a flask. The *pulajan* drinks, his eyes spiteful in the face of him; then his hand moves sudden. Shamus Macroom jerks back, but not before the knife has slashed him deep across the cheek.

Corporil Bustabo jumps in, swingin' his Krag up to bust in the *pulajan's* head with the butt, but Shamus Macroom stops him. Blood is runnin' down his cheek but he pays no attention.

"Ask him where Simeon Grueso is," he says to Corporil Bustabo.

The Macabebe puts the question, but I can see that he would rather put about a foot of bayonet into this feller. Well, the *pulajan* won't talk at first. Shamus Macroom gives him more whiskey an' then more after that. It loosens his tongue finally an' he begins to talk—boastin', for he is a tough little man who knows that he is dyin'.

Pope Grueso is not at Igcagona, he says. The deserter who has come to us at Llorente has lied. He has been sent there to lead the expedition into the trap which this Simeon Grueso has set. That trap is goin' to be sprung tonight in the big valley, which we are headed for, an' there are a thousand *pulajans* who will do the springin'.

Our prisoner then dies peaceable.

"Ye believe him?" I ask Shamus.

He nods slow, wipin' at the blood which still drips from his cheek. "I'm thinkin' that he spoke the truth. It comes to the mind of me that he had good reason to believe that we would not carry the word to Cap'n Murphy in time to warn him."

I think of them red-shirted *pulajans* who have disappeared into the *coogan* grass an' I think of the miles of trail that we have got to cross to reach the next valley.

There is reason for the *pulajan's* belief, I think.

"What are ye goin' to do, Shamus Macroom?"

"March," he says short. "We have got little enough time to carry the word to the column."

Well, that march will stand out in the mind of me for a long time yet. Five times more durin' that afternoon do we beat off attacks. The only thing that saves us is that the little brown men have not learned to close in quiet. Always there is that pad of runnin' feet an' that "*Tad-tad!*" screamin' against the afternoon. It gives us a minute to get set.

We lose two more men, leavin' them where they fall, for we cannot clutter ourselves with the bodies of 'em if we are to reach the valley in time. Corporil Bustabo gets cut nasty on the arm, but he ties it up an' goes on.

IT IS durin' the rest of that day that I learn that Sergint Shamus Macroom is indeed a great soldier. When the attacks come he is everywhere at once, his red head flamin' an' his face laughin' beneath the dried blood. He carries his men along in the palm of his hand, so to speak, leadin' them when they will follow an' drivin' them when they will not. A lesser man than Shamus Macroom would never have brought his patrol out of Orasio Valley that day.

It is sunset when we cross the hogback an' see the big valley stretchin' out below us. The trail is more open now an' it goes down fast. Strange enough, we see no more of the *pulajans* for a time. The moon has come up by the time we hit the valley floor; we cut the main trail an' Shamus Macroom halts us. It is a broad an' deep trail.

Corporil Bustabo comes up.

"The column has passed?" Shamus Macroom asks him.

The Macabebe nods, pointin' to signs here an' there.

"Maybe three-four hour before," he says.

"You think this is the road to Igcagona?"

The little brown man spits into the dust. "Maybe. Big trail. Much carabao go along this trail."

"Simeon Grueso's supply trail," Shamus Macroom says thoughtful. "We will be gettin' on, O'Hare."

So we march once more. We move slow, like drunks up the trail, for our legs have stiffened in the rest—we have been marchin' an' fightin' for close to eighteen hours now. The valley narrows gradual in front of us until it is more like a canyon with the walls steep an' high on either side.

I hear something movin' ahead of us in the night, then, an' Shamus Macroom calls out soft to halt. He goes forward with Corporil Bustabo an' is gone for five minutes. Then he comes back.

"Carabao," he says to me. "Hundreds of 'em penned up in the canyon farther down. We are on Simeon Grueso's trail all right, O'Hare."

We go on an' presently I see 'em in the moonlight. They are penned in a big corral which stretches half across the bed of the canyon, an' from the uneasy millin' of 'em, I know that they have smelled us. I am glad that the corral is there, for there is no animal more wicked than a carabao when he is mad.

The *boudjons* have been murmurin' from the hills for the past hour, off an' on, an' now they are beatin' faster. It is a message of some sort, for sudden a shot sounds faint against the moonlight. Then maybe half a dozen more. Well, I think, it is time to be pickin' a partner, for the dance is beginnin'.

Shamus Macroom says, "We have not got there in time, O'Hare. Howsoever, we will go on."

The canyon here is maybe two hundred yards wide an' it now begins to open out more with walls that lift up maybe three or four hundred feet. The floor is slopin' with no vegetation except the *coogan* grass. The trail goes down through the middle, but Shamus Macroom leads us off toward the walls. Then, presently, we halt where we can look down.

THE moon is high now an' it is easy to see. There is a big bowl down there where the canyon has opened out wide, maybe a mile across. On the far side a big heap of rock has drooped from the rim an' it makes a little knoll, maybe fifty feet high, close to the other wall. As I look I see little flashes spit out now an' then from the top of this knoll.

Shamus Macroom sees the same thing. "The company is there. They have made the boulders into a fort an' are holdin' their

own for the moment. Which gives us time."

'Tis not at the knoll that I am lookin', howsoever. Down, perhaps a quarter of a mile to the left of us, I see shapes in the grass. There are more shapes to the right an' there are shapes down in front. *Pulajans*! I think that our prisoner has not lied when he has said that there are a thousand of 'em—ten thousand would be nearer my guess. And once again I am homesick for Mindanao.

From where I am I can see that they are massin' into a rough formation. Shamus Macroom calls out soft to Corporil Bustabo.

"They are about to rush, Corporil?"

The Macabebe shakes his head. "Not yet. You have heard the *boudjons*?"

"I have heard."

"They are saying that they will wait until the moon has touched the pointed mountain," Corporil Bustabo says in effect. "Then they will get up an' they will run across the valley with their bolos an' make a great killin'."

Shamus Macroom sits there for a long time, starin' across the valley. I see the pointed mountain, which Corporil Bustabo has spoke of—the moon is maybe three-quarters of an hour above it yet.

Finally I ask, "Do ye have a plan, Shamus Macroom?"

He turns an' looks at me for a long minute. Then he grins an' I can see the recklessness which is in his eyes.

"Have ye ever heard of a lad called Samson, O'Hare?" he asks.

"I do not recall him," I answer short, for it is a poor time to be reminiscin' about past acquaintances.

"He was a strong an' sudden man who used to live down in the River Jordan valley," he tells me.

I look at him amazed. Crazy as a coot, I think—still, it is little wonder.

"O'Hare," he says, "ye will now take charge here. I must be about the business of me."

He slips back along the rim an' is gone before I can lay a hand on him.

Well, we cannot sit twiddlin' our thumbs while the company is fightin' for its life across there on the knoll. So finally I call Corporil Bustabo an' tell him that we will slip down into the canyon an' try to make our way across before the attack comes. He shakes his head.

"No good," he says an' points.

I see that the moon has sunk down until it is just touchin' the top of the pointed mountain. Sudden the *boudjons* begin to give full tongue an' I know that it is too late. Down there in front the *coogan* grass looks as if it is alive.

It is the *pulajans*—hundreds of 'em that seem to sort of spring out of the ground. In the moonlight I can see 'em plain as they bunch into long lines for a minute. Then that damned "*Tad-tad*!" goes up shrill an' the little brown men are goin' across the canyon floor at a boundin' run, with their white capes flyin' out behind 'em an' the moonlight flashin' on the wicked blades of the bolos.

It is a grand an' a fearsome sight. Fire blossoms from the knoll, but the bullets make no more impression on that screamin' mass of men than does a pebble make an impression upon the sea. Me heart is cold in me, for I know that they are too many—they will roll over that knoll an' then the company will be gone. I stand there an' cannot move as I watch the *pulajans* reach the center of the canyon.

It is Corporil Bustabo's voice which brings me back to me senses. He is yellin' an' pointin' up the canyon with the finger of him. All of a sudden I am conscious of another sound which is drownin' out the *boudjons* an' is liftin' above the scream of them crazy men down there.

Well, I have never seen anything like it before or since.

There is a dull red glow which is mountin' into the sky back up the canyon, an' ahead of that glow there is a dark line which is flowin' down across the level floor of the canyon as a wave flows across the beach. A thunder is boomin' up an' then I understand.

"Carabao! Carabao!" Corporil Bustabo is screamin'.

Shamus Macroom has loosed that herd of carabao which we have seen up the canyon, an' he has stampeded 'em down upon the *pulajans*, usin' fire for the purpose. I can see 'em plain now an' I know that no power on earth can save that close packed mass of men which is full in their path.

It is a terrible an' a magnificent sight.

The *pulajans* have seen an' a long wail goes up into the night as they understand that their death is close upon them. The

wave is over them then. It flows around the little knoll an' it rolls on by. Presently it is gone an' the canyon is quiet with a great quietness.

WELL, we are back in Manila before I learn all that has gone on that night. I have not asked, although when Shamus Macroom rejoins the column at daybreak that mornin', he looks worse than he does the night we meet in the Calle Santo Tomas. He is near dead from a half a dozen nasty cuts an' his left arm is half chopped away.

I am due to sail for Zamboango in the evenin', so before I go I smuggle a couple of bottles under me coat an' go up to see Shamus in the hospital to bid him good-by. He is sittin' propped up in bed, bandaged up like a mummy, an' he grins at me as I come in.

We sample the beer an' talk of this an' that.

" 'Tis sorry that I am to see ye go, O'Hare," he says. "Maybe some time I will visit ye in Mindanao to return the call."

"Ye will find it tame for your tastes," I tell him. "Howsoever, we will do our best to provide ye with entertainment—say a fight every second day with a double-header on Sunday."

He grins again an' then his face tightens a little.

"Ye remember that I have spoke to ye of one Simeon Grueso, O'Hare?"

"I do," I inform him.

"I had got the bars of the corral broke down," he says soft, "an' I was on me way back to start the fire. Then, sudden, a half a dozen *pulajans* come out of the *coogan* grass directly in front of me. Simeon Grueso is with 'em."

Shamus Macroom sips at his beer. Then he goes on.

"He recognizes me, O'Hare. At his word the others slip around so that I am cut off.

" 'It is thee Sergint Macroom,' he says.

" 'The same,' I tell him. 'Do ye stand aside, Simeon, for I have business which I would be about. After I have finished I will come back an' settle with ye.'

"He smiles nasty.

" 'We weel settle now, my fren',' he says. 'Me I 'ave wait thee long time.'

"Well, I am an impatient man, O'Hare."

Shamus Macroom finished his beer an' eyes the empty bottle regretful, favorin' me with a reproachful look that I have not brought more.

"Ye will be finishin' the story, Shamus," I tell him firm.

"Oh, that," he says. "There is little to tell. I got him by the throat, a thing I had long been wantin' to do. His men were hackin' at me some but I broke his neck. Afterward I took his bolo an' dispersed them that was able to disperse. Afterward, I was able to set me fire in peace."

"Ye are a strange an' sudden man, Shamus Macroom," I say to him reverent.

He grins again an' scratches at the red bristle on the chin of him with one of his bandaged hands. "Would ye be recallin' now the story about this Samson down in the River Jordan valley?"

"I would."

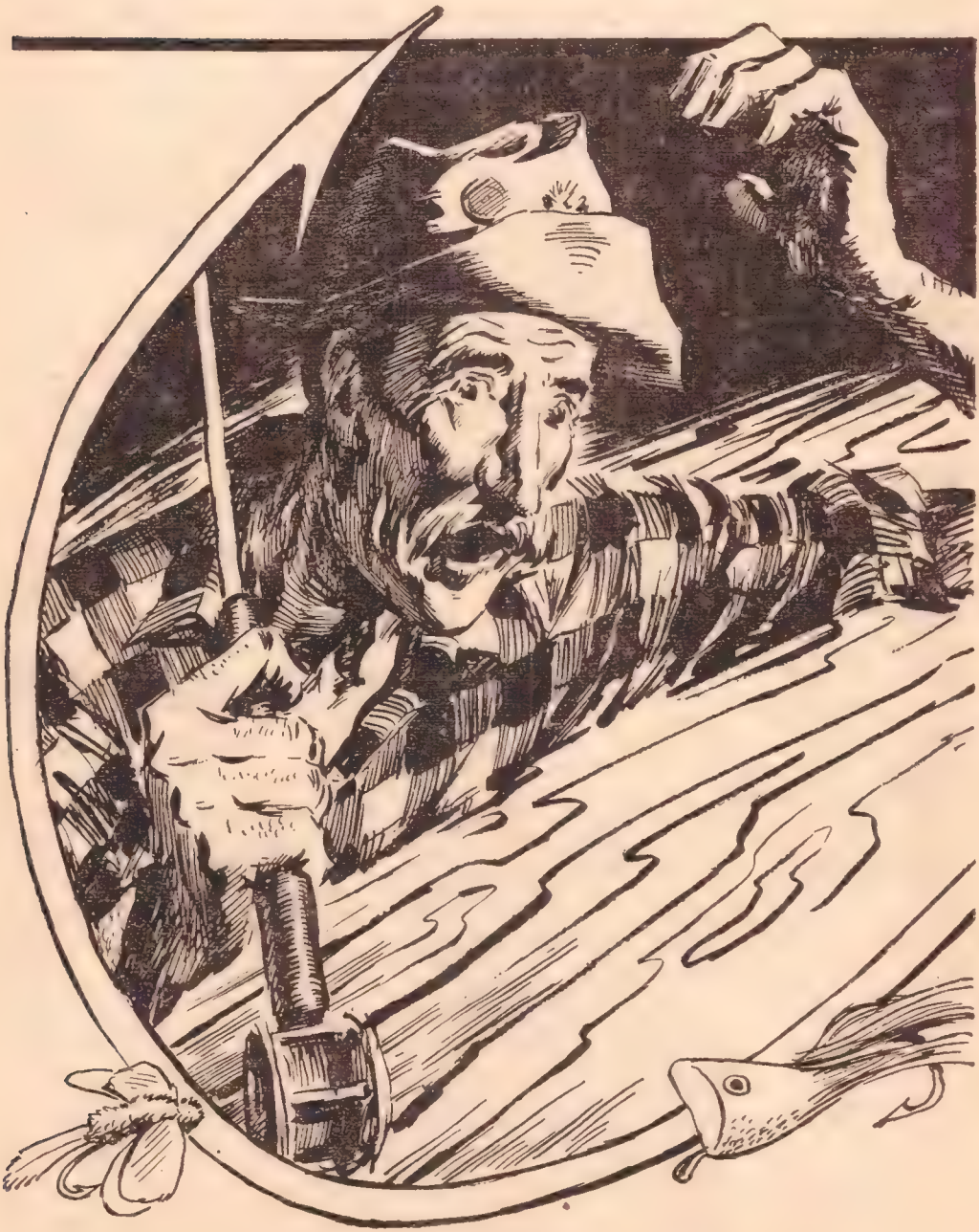
"Well," says Shamus Macroom, " 'tis me belief that the jawbones of an ass are scarce commodities in Samar. I had to do the best that I could with the tools which I had to the hand of me."

TWO WAYS TO SHRINK A MAN

Along the Maranon River (as the upper Amazon is called) in Peru, is the Zaruma and Jivaro country, both tribes being headhunters, who perform the head shrinking in a slightly different manner. To the south side of the river along this portion there are anthropophagi (cannibals) and savages. On up above, however, up to the very source, one strikes milder aborigines in progressive stages of tameness until the conquered and spiritless Quechuans are reached in the high Andes. The head hunters use bows, spears of chonta palm and poisoned arrow blowguns. The poisoned arrows are used for stunning game or killing it, as the poison does not make it unfit to eat. Most of the heads they take as trophies are cut from enemies killed in raids. The cannibals south of the river eat their enemies taken captive in battle.

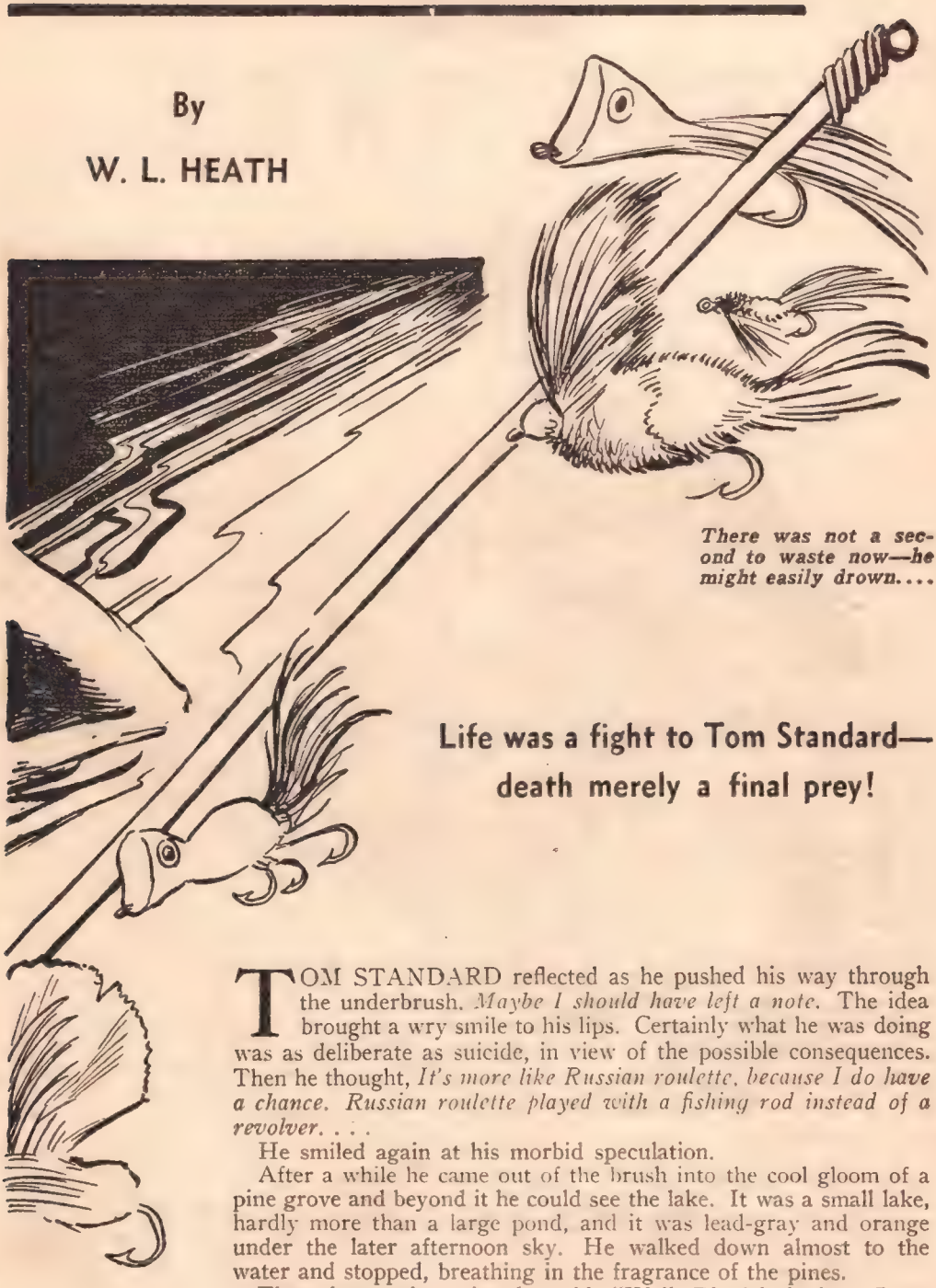
—From the files of Ask Adventure

BIG DARK



By

W. L. HEATH



There was not a second to waste now—he might easily drown....

Life was a fight to Tom Standard—death merely a final prey!

TOM STANDARD reflected as he pushed his way through the underbrush. *Maybe I should have left a note.* The idea brought a wry smile to his lips. Certainly what he was doing was as deliberate as suicide, in view of the possible consequences. Then he thought, *It's more like Russian roulette, because I do have a chance. Russian roulette played with a fishing rod instead of a revolver. . . .*

He smiled again at his morbid speculation.

After a while he came out of the brush into the cool gloom of a pine grove and beyond it he could see the lake. It was a small lake, hardly more than a large pond, and it was lead-gray and orange under the later afternoon sky. He walked down almost to the water and stopped, breathing in the fragrance of the pines.

Then, in a quiet voice, he said, "Well, Big Black, here I am again."

He put down his rod case and hip boots and sat down beside them. Then he took an unopened package of cigarettes from his pocket and looked at it. He hadn't had a cigarette in six weeks. He'd had only three in the past five months. *I ought to think about*

this, he told himself. *I ought to be sure I know what I'm doing.*

The scene when he looked back on it, seemed absurdly melodramatic—acted out just the way they would have done it in the movies. The doctor had taken off his glasses and placed them on his desk with precisely the right attitude of gravity and deliberation, and he had leaned back and put his fingertips together. "I'm going to speak plainly, Mr. Standish." (You ought to get a man's name right when you tell him he's going to die, Standard thought.) "Frankly, it's a matter of five or ten years, or five or ten days, Mr. Standish. It's up to you. No more cigarettes, coffee, whiskey. Above all, avoid excitement. Excitement in your condition might very well prove fatal."

He opened the package of cigarettes, took one out and rolled it between his fingers. Then he licked one end of it, put it in his mouth and struck a match on the sole of his shoe. He held the match away until the sulphur burned off, then he lit the cigarette and inhaled deeply. The odor of tobacco mingled with that of the pines, and the smell of it was better than anything he had smelled in five long months. He leaned back on his elbow and looked out at the lake.

Somewhere out there the big bass lay waiting. The Big Black. His fish. Huge and fierce and cunning, and powerful almost beyond belief. A fish that transcended the concept and meaning of any word describing its kind—a terrific, awesome thing that struck savagely, as if he understood and was infuriated by the puny challenge of the lure, leaping up in a glory of flashing water to shake his great head at you in defiance. A fish that fought you fair and square like the gentleman he was, and had more heart than any man who ever walked the earth.

Three times they had fought in three summers, and now the time had come again. That was why he was here. He had thought it out clearly and you couldn't say to a fish like that, *"Sorry, old man, I'm not well. We'll have to call it off."* No, the Big Black would not understand quitting. There was no quit in him.

He smoked slowly, with relish, and when he was through he dug under the pine needles and buried the butt in the soft, musty earth beneath. Then he got up to put on his boots. He tucked the legs of his trousers into his socks and pulled the boots on, fastening them to his belt by the long rubber straps. When that was done he took the base section of the fly rod from the case, set the reel in place and locked it. He took the other sections out, rubbed the ferrules with his fingers to oil them, and then joined them and set them into the butt section of the rod.

He held the rod out before him and gave it a sharp flick, like a coach whip. The response was good. Nine-and-one-half feet, split bamboo—the finest quality you could buy. A lovely thing with a rosewood handle. Lovely to look at and to hold. A rod with action all the way down to the handle. Yet it would take skill. One small mistake, one miscalculation and the Big Black would snap the tip as easily as a man breaks a matchstem in his fingers.

It had happened before. He was one more fish, the Big Black. A man had to love a fish like that. In a whole lifetime of fishing, one hell of a fish.

HE STRIPPED several feet of line from the reel and threaded it through the guides. Then he took a flat tine box from his hip pocket and opened it. There were three heavy, level gut leaders and an assortment of dry flies, bucktails, streamers, spinners and bass bugs. He selected a large black popping bug.

He waded out a short distance and felt the cold grip of the water around his legs. As he soaked the leaders he watched the fish feeding—they were beginning to feed at the surface now, making circles and an occasional splash as they came up for the willow flies swarming low over the water.

The black bug would be all right. He put two of the leaders back in the box, made a loop in the other and fixed it to his line. Then he tied on the black bug and he was ready. He waded ashore again to look around and select the places he would fish.

The lake was a kidney-shaped body with a long, shallow slough at one end grown up in reeds. He had hung the Big Black there once, in water that wasn't two feet deep. That time he had come early in May when the fields were purple with vetch, and

he had found the Big Black on the nest.

It was something to think about—the big fish rocking slowly in the shallow water, fanning the silt away from the eggs. A bass will not feed when he is on the bed, but he will attack anything that comes near.

That had been a fight, but it had ended too quickly, with the Big Black snarling the line in the reeds and snapping the leader. He wanted him in deep water this time, where there was room to work and nothing to foul the line. Then it would be a fight.

He wondered how big he was now. Last year he had guessed him at eight or nine pounds. This year he might weigh ten. But what difference did the size make? The thing that counted was the heart. There were plenty of bigger fish, but none gamer. That's what really counted, the heart. And that's what the Big Black had.

He walked about a hundred yards along the irregular perimeter of the lake, pushing his way through little clumps of gum saplings and once leaving the bank to wade around a thick growth of honeysuckle. At last he came to the place he was looking for—a fallen tree which protruded into the water. He waded in above it, moving slowly. Standing knee-deep, he dropped the lure in the water and stripped more line from the reel. Then he raised the rod and brought the line up and out of the water, snapping it back high above his head. He flicked the line forward in a long false cast, brought it back and then forward again and laid the fly neatly in the shadows under the fallen tree. He left it there, rocking delicately in the tiny rings it had made on the water. At that moment the doctor's words came to him as clearly as if someone had spoken them at his elbow: *Above all, avoid excitement.* Then he gave the lure a little twitch.

AN HOUR later he stepped out on the bank some two hundred yards from where he had started. He had caught three fish and released them—one of them a four-pounder—and had lost another almost as large. The sun already was gone behind the mountains, but there would be another forty-five minutes, maybe an hour, before it was too dark to fish. He decided to sit down and rest for a moment.

As he sat holding the rod up between his knees he heard a noise in the water several yards away and to his left, a place he had fished not ten minutes before. It sounded as though someone had rolled a log off a low bank into the water—not a flat splash, but a heavy, ponderous *slush*. He stood up quickly and saw bubbles rising in the center of a large circle which spread rapidly where a willow bush hung over the water. The Big Black. This was him and there was no doubt.

ANNUAL SPEED SURVEY

HOW do passenger train speeds compare on major railroads around the country? Is the fast mileage increasing or decreasing? What is the number of mile-a-minute runs compared with, say, the year 1936? In RAILROAD MAGAZINE's famed "Annual Speed Survey," Don Steffee gives the answers to these questions, with the authority of a man who has made an intensive study of passenger train schedules for the past 15 years. No railroad fan would want to miss this valuable report on top U. S. and Canadian varnish runs, nor any of the other informative and entertaining features to be found in the interest-packed April RAILROAD. Reserve your copy now——send 35c to

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For the first time the light, uncertain feeling came into his stomach. He drew himself up straight and took a deep breath, trying to fight down the excitement. He surveyed the situation hastily and decided to go into the water where he was, wading down with the bank on his left so the line would be out over the water on the back cast with no danger of snagging in a bush or low-hanging tree limb. He went into the water carefully, never taking his eyes off the eddied surface where the Big Black had struck.

When he was near enough, he let the lure fall in the water, pulled several feet of line from the reel and made a cast out to his right, away from the willow bush. Then he pulled more line from the reel and he was ready.

He snapped the line back in a long, looping figure eight and when he felt the tug at the tip of the rod, he drove it forward. The yellow line rolled out low over the water and the fly fell with a *stap* at the edge of the shadow beneath the willow bush. He waited several seconds, taking up the slack with his left hand. Then he gave the rod a little flick.

The Big Black stabbed across inches behind the lure and the water surged and swirled in deep, powerful eddies. He had missed.

As he retrieved the lure his arm was shaking and he felt a long, cold finger of perspiration run down the center of his back. He cast again, but in his nervousness the motion was awkward, and the leader and fly fell in a tangle. Cursing softly, he retrieved the lure again. This time the cast was good, but there was no response. The lure came back to him undisturbed.

Holding the rod under his arm, he dried his hands on the front of his shirt, took off his hat and dried the band with a sleeve. Then he prepared to cast again. He edged forward a few steps and felt about until he had a firm footing. He made his cast, bringing the line out to the right and firing it with a side-arm motion, so that the lure dropped into the water well under the willow bush.

As he brought it back in short, quick steps the Big Black struck again. There was and explosive eruption of water and he saw the big fish roll into the lure, take it and slap the water with a report like a rifle shot.

He set the hook, and the line left the reel with a wild, echoing shriek. He let it go, knowing he must, and praying there would be enough. The rod in his hand was a living thing now, drumming and pumping under the impact of that incredible, unseen force. The Big Black drove out from the bank and sounded, demanding more and more line.

He got the rod into his left hand and clamped down on the reel with his right, holding and holding until he felt the dangerous wire-like tautness up through his forearm. Then he yielded again. More line screamed off the reel, but he had turned him. He struggled forward and felt the cold water above his boots, soaking through about his groin and running down inside his boots to his knees.

The line zigzagged crazily over the surface, leaving a tiny V-shaped wake; then the Big Black came up and broke the surface, standing up on his tail, massive and terrific, his black-green body glistening. He half turned his white belly toward Standard and hit the water again, churning it to yellow foam. Standard reeled in quickly to take the slack out of the line, and the Big Black plunged toward the right bank. He turned to follow and lost his footing momentarily, going down into a crouch that brought the water up almost to his shoulders. The Big Black cut back, as if to charge him, then twisted sharply and leaped again. There was a sawing feeling in the line for an instant and Standard felt something give—tissue tearing.

Then he saw what had happened. The Big Black had gone over a partially submerged log and brought the line down on it. He was still hooked, the rod nodded and drummed, but now something was wrong. The feel of it was wrong. The Big Black feinted again, then turned and drove straight toward him. Standard reeled frantically, waiting for him to turn—but he did not turn. He drove straight in. The line bellied down to the water and the Big Black came out. He broke the surface in a violent smashing leap that brought him clear of the water, twisting and arching in mid-air. For an interminable moment he stood there, the enormous mouth open, gills flared to show the red beneath. Then in a final supreme effort he lashed back and forth and flung the lure

out. It dropped to the water ten or twelve feet away, turning vaguely on the currents that ran out where the Big Black had gone down again.

The battle was over. The line hung slack from the rod tip and slipped back slowly to droop between the guides.

TOM STANDARD stood very still, watching the drops of water slide along the line. Then he felt the telltale sensation of dismay—the indescribable sinking feeling, as when you suddenly realize you have forgotten something important. Without trying to retrieve the line, he turned and started toward the bank. There was not a second to waste now; he might easily drown. As he reached the bank the constricted, suffocating feeling went up into his chest and throat. He dropped the rod and fell forward on his hands, rolling over and straining his head back to get it above the smothering heat that engulfed him. He fumbled for his belt and unfastened it and tore open his shirt at the collar. It was bad, and he knew it, but there was no panic this time as there had been before. He knew he was not afraid. He struggled and fought back in silence, and it seemed to him he gained the upper hand. A little more, he thought, just a little bit more. . . .

Gradually calm returned. The clean sharp smell of the pines crept into his consciousness again and he looked up at the evening sky. He would have to lie here a while until he had some strength, but that was all right; he had plenty of time now.

He put his hands behind his head and moved until he was in a comfortable position. Then he remembered he had dropped the rod at the edge of the water. He raised himself to look over the toes of his boots. The rod was lying on the gravely fringe of the bank with the tip in the water. Some distance out the line came to the surface, and he could see the lure floating quietly on the black water. It was all right. He could leave it there until he had the strength to walk back to his car.

He looked up at the sky again. A few stars were appearing now, and heat lightning had begun to play along the horizon to the south. Night was closing in. He thought of the Big Black, lying out there somewhere nursing his torn lip. It had been a good fight—the best, so far. *You might say we fought to a draw this time,* he thought.

Next time. . . . A smile spread slowly across his face. . . . Yes, next time.

Now he understood the odd feeling of relief that had come over him. This had not been the last inning after all. The Big Black was still out there, and no matter what the doctors said, the game wasn't over yet.

He'd be back, all right. There was no doubt about that any more.

HELL WITH A HANDGUN!

By Marvin DeVries

It was a day loaded with dynamite when Buddy Baines showed up for his last visit, neatly boxed in a pine coffin. For that bullet-bitten dead man raised more assorted jumpin' hell with Wade's Corral than any crew of living gunslingers bound to wipe out that wild cowtown in a storm of blood and gunsmoke!

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MAGAZINE

SOUTH OF SUDDEN

You could see him stagger in mid-air, and then the smoke started coming out. . . .

DEATH

A Story of Flaming Seas

by Albert Richard Wetjen

I DON'T know if it's Mr. McCaffrey's story or Captain Menzies'. I'm not supposed to be a sailor, anyway, so I couldn't be sure. I've been the captain's steward for fifteen years, ever since he took over the *Bengal Pride*, and you know what sailors think of stewards. Our opinions don't count and we're not much use except for fixing up cabins and rustling the grub and maybe once in a while nursing a sick man along. So put me down as a bystander and I'll tell only what I saw and heard.

Mr. McCaffrey was the new second mate when we sailed from the coast for Charns' Bay, down in the South Pacific. He was a big fellow, with red hair, freckles, a cocky sort of grin, and a pug nose. He was twenty years old, only six months out of cadet school and very belligerent about it. Captain Menzies looked him over when he reported, and sort of half sighed.

"I see you've made a couple of voyages," he said, flipping over the second's papers. And he added humorously: "That practically makes you an old-timer."

Mr. McCaffrey frowned a bit and rubbed his chin with his uniform cap. "I guess I can get along, sir," he admitted stiffly. "I—er—wonder if I could have a few hours off before I turn to. There's a girl . . ." His voice died away as the old man leaned back in his swivel chair and smiled. The old man was long, lean, rangy, and grim. His hair was white and his face seamed and sunburned from forty-odd years of salt water. When he smiled the way he smiled at the new second you just tightened up because he wasn't being funny.

"Mr. McCaffrey," he said very precisely, putting his finger tips together, "you have

been on board possibly fifteen minutes, and already you want permission for shore leave." I was busy tidying up the cabin and he inclined his head at me. "Steward! Show Mr. McCaffrey his room. And kindly inform him we sail in six hours and there is a great deal to be done."

That was the old man's way when he wanted to be particularly sarcastic. He addressed a third party with the information intended for the second. The new mate flushed and said, "I quite understand, sir. Sorry." And very stiffly he slammed on his cap and went out. I went after him.

"Pretty stuffy old bird, eh?" he snapped as I unlocked his door. "How the hell was I to know we were going out right away?"

"I wouldn't know, sir," I told him. "But if I were you I'd get into work clothes and report to the mate. We're loading some heavy stuff aft and you'll find him there."

"We got any other old fossils aboard?" the second wanted to know, which showed he was still pretty green. You don't ask stewards questions about things like that, especially the captain's steward. I said, "I really wouldn't know, sir. I've only been on board fifteen years." And I left him swallowing hard and went back on the lower bridge. The old man was idly rocking back and forth and staring out of the open door.

"Like most of the others, steward," he said absently. "They get pretty sound training at the cadet schools and they know all the answers." He took out his pipe and bit down on it without lighting it. "You know," he added, "you can learn most anything from books—navigation, even seamanship of a sort. But there's one thing you can't learn. And that," he waved his pipe, "is experience. You have to pay for that, and the price is time. Oh, well!"

I said, "Yes, sir." and passed him his tobacco jar. I'd heard him make the same little speech ever since the war had stripped us of experienced hands needed to take over the new ships that were sliding fast off the ways. We'd get a crowd of land-trained green hands and we'd break them in, and as soon as they got so they were fairly reliable they were taken away to more new ships, and we were stuck with another bunch of green stuff to wrestle with. I knew how the old man felt. Outside of the chief engineer and the bosun, he was about the only one on board with any real sea years behind him, and I'd seen him age a little every voyage. I'd aged myself, for that matter, what with handling slangy, fresh stewards each run, who didn't know a dishrag from the way to set a table.

Well, I had some business aft a little before we sailed and I could hear Mr. McCaffrey's voice blaring out even above the winch rattle. He was on his knees, in a tangle of ropes and blocks, telling the bosun how he had a tackle rigged all wrong. That boy certainly figured he was good. He had Mr. Tomkins, the first mate, and Mr. Adrian, the third, for a rather approving audience, and half the stevedores were standing around grinning. The bosun was a raw-boned Norwegian who'd served in sail before the second was born, and he was just standing there impassively with his hands in his hip pockets, his jaw working away on a chew of tobacco and his faded blue eyes looking dreamily uninterested.

"Oh, yah," he said at last. "Dot vould vork, but I do it my way, see?" and he turned his back and waved to the men to go ahead.

Mr. McCaffrey got up, dusting off his pants and swearing indignantly. "I like that!" he raged. "I give him the very latest dope and he tells me. . . . Say, who's running this ship, anyway?"

Mr. Tomkins, the mate, gripped his arm and shook him a little, laughing. "I know, McCaffrey, but you can't argue with 'im. The old man'd back him up if you squawked, anyway. Best thing here is to tell the bosun what you want done and then forget it. It's a mess usually but it's done somehow." Mr. Tomkins, I think, had been to sea all of five years, so he had a glimmering of what the old man called experience.

Well, you get the idea. It was the same below in the engine room and it was the same in the focsle. All husky youngsters with just a spotting of older men, but somehow the *Bengal Pride* always got in, by-guess-and-by-God I suppose, as the saying is.

WELL, we sailed at last and I had things to worry about myself, trying to break in a couple of new stewards. The second mate busted a wire back-spring he forgot to order cast off and the first mate had some argument with a couple of fo'csle

drunks so all the ship and most of the dock-side could hear. But that's usual these times and we got clear all right. I knew Captain Menzies wouldn't leave the navigation bridge until things had shaken down a bit, so I took him up coffee and sandwiches. He was in the chart-room checking and re-checking the course the second had laid out, and the second was leaning against the chart table frowning and looking sour. I guessed he felt a bit insulted, though I could have told him he wasn't being picked on.

I set the coffee and sandwich tray down on the old man's special low table clamped near one end of the chartroom settee, and he said automatically, "Thanks, steward. I'll be down for dinner. You can fix a bath for two bells." And I said, "Yes sir," and started to go when I heard the second, pretty exasperated, say, "But I tell you, sir, we can't get *into* Charns' Bay. I've been looking it up. The charts, such as they are, give us only two fathoms at best, and the *South Pacific Pilot* says it's only a good anchorage for small, light vessels. I should think that lets *us* out. We're drawing thirty feet."

"Possibly," said the old man, tossing the dividers down on the chart and stretching I suppose his lumbago was bothering him again. "Anyway, the course is good, Mr. McCaffrey. You carry on so. . . . Er, Charns' Bay. Oh, yes. What edition of the *Pilot* have we?"

The second muttered something and scowled and jerked the volume from the shelf above the settee and thumbed the pages. "Fifteen years old, sir!" he announced viciously. "And I suppose the chart we've got is as bad!"

"Probably," agreed the old man, sighing. He dropped to the settee and stirred his coffee. He talked very mildly. "Very few South Pacific charts are accurate, you know. You simply have to go in and find out. Hand-lead and guesswork."

"Well, what dope we've got's not going to be any help," the second stated, slamming back the *Pilot*. The old man smiled that wintry little smile of his and I got ready.

"Steward," he said dryly, "would you kindly inform Mr. McCaffrey that the *Bengal Pride* and myself were selected to start a possible line to Charns' Bay for somewhat specific reasons. Would you also inform him that the entry in the *Pacific Pilot* as of fifteen years ago was supplied by myself, from very preliminary sketchy surveys."

The second stared, popeyed, and swallowed. "You mean you—then you *must* know we can't get in with that depth!"

Captain Menzies sipped his coffee and nodded. "No," he agreed, reasonably, "we couldn't. But my surveys were sketchy at the best and the great typhoon and tidal wave of '36 tore out the mushroom coral and scooped a channel clear to the beach." He shrugged. "How do I know? I don't. Er—steward, would you kindly inform Mr. McCaffrey the Hydrographic Office has been good enough to agree with my deductions. Just a matter of logic when you know the waters. We are what you call pioneers. Charns' Bay is important if it can be used. I think it can."

Mr. McCaffrey just stood there gaping and then slowly scratched his head. "Now look, sir," he said. "You mean you're backing a hunch that Charns' Bay's a good harbor now? That we can get deep-water freighters in?" He fumbled for a cigarette. "I know there's a war on, and sticking your neck out is just one of those things, but. look—"

"Steward," said the old man, stopping the talk. "I think McCaffrey would like some coffee too." So I said, "Yes, sir," and the second just stood there all puzzled and frowning and pretty exasperated.

I heard him later talking to the mate. "I don't aim to be wrecked on a crazy beach with a lot of fuzzy-haired cannibals coming after me," he blared. "All because some old goat sat in a swivel chair back in '36 and figured out what *might* have happened to a blocked channel. I still think he's nuts!"

"Sure," soothed the mate. "We're all nuts or we wouldn't be going to sea." The second just snorted and walked away.

WELL, things were pretty subdued for a while after that, as we ran into a thick fog that hung for days and depressed everyone. We were running at half-speed and by dead-reckoning, of course, and I heard there were one or two rather touchy disagreements about the course between Mr. McCaffrey and the old man. Mr. Mc-

Caffrey, as I've said, felt he was pretty damned good and was out to make everything a debatable matter. I only saw such a clash once myself, when I took coffee and sandwiches to the chartroom the second night of the fog. The old man and Mr. McCaffrey and Mr. Tomkins were pawing over a chart, or rather Mr. McCaffrey was while the others looked on. The second was pretty grim too, jabbing here and there with a pencil and slapping the chart with the parallel rulers.

"And I tell you the current drift's not over a knot here, sir," he was saying positively. "Give a fifty-percent error either way and we'll still clear the Lagos Shoals."

The old man lighted his pipe and nodded. "You're maybe right, mister," he agreed, "but I recall the *Starlight* ran aground on Lagos in thick weather because of figuring much as you do. There's no reliable data on the drift here. Better be safe than sorry. So suppose we allow for a three-knot drift."

"That's pretty wild!" exploded the second and the old man nodded again, good-naturedly. "Oh, sure," he said. "It'd be unusual to say the least. But let's just suppose, and we'll swing wide to make sure."

"And lose a day, maybe two," said Mr. McCaffrey, indignant. "I thought this Charns' Bay stuff was urgent."

"Urgent, but not held to a schedule." The old man gave a twisted smile, watching him. "Let's go for'ard, Mr. McCaffrey, and try to figure it," he suggested. "Maybe ease your mind."

"Go for'ard?" choked the second. "You can't even see to get off the bridge in this fog. And how could you see to do any sort of figuring?"

"Well, we can try," said the skipper, reasonably. "And if you can't find your way just hang on to my coat. I've been fifteen years on the *Bengal Pride* and I hardly need a clear day to find my way around."

They went out together and I heard the telegraph ring and the wheel go over so the ship was hove to, dead slow on the flat, fog-hung sea.

Well, I didn't see what happened for'ard, of course, but so far as I understood it later Captain Menzies dropped some lifebelt flares overside and he and the second watched the ghostly lights drift away into the smother, the ship being practically stationary, and the old man estimated the drift speed at a good two knots. I never heard what McCaffrey actually thought of the experiment, but I did hear him say it was uncanny how the old man could find his way along deck in that smother, and not even trip over a deadeye or a ringbolt. Well, as the old man said himself, he'd been fifteen years on the ship and knew his way about.

He sent for me to bring up some coffee just after the drift argument and he was looking over a radio slip when I got to his cabin.

"We just picked this one up, steward," he said, sounding pretty tired. "Charns' Bay was supposed to be out of any immediate war zone, but now it seems the Japs have been flying planes around, maybe figuring we might take a look in and see if the harbor is possible. Or maybe they've notions of their own about it. Anyway, we may have trouble. You'd better tell your department to wear life jackets night and day again. We've all been getting a little slack lately."

I said, "Yes, sir," and passed the word around and I noticed the gunners got more alert and we all but instinctively watched the sky as we got nearer port. I ran into Mr. McCaffrey in the saloon alleyway.

"You, steward!" he said, stopping me. "You're pretty close to the skipper, I guess. What's he going to do about this Jap plane business?"

I just said the usual polite, "I wouldn't know, sir."

"Well, it looks to me we ought to shove into one of the navy bases and get some escort protection before we barge into Charns' Bay. We won't have a chance against bombers."

I said, "Possibly not, sir, but I'm sure Captain Menzies has thought of that."

"Oh, hell, yes!" snapped the second. "He thinks of every damned thing! But he ought to talk this over—" He checked himself—I figured he suddenly realized he was saying too much to the wrong party—and stalked away, muttering.

It must have been about two days later, as we were easing up through the archipelago to the big island where Charns' Bay was located, that the plane came. Everyone

spotted it at once, and how could you miss it? We were steaming full ahead over a long, treacly green sea, and the sun was high and the sky sheer blue, with never a cloud, so the black speck stood out like a thumbtack. Of course we all sweated about whether it was a Jap ship or one of ours, and we had to wait until it peeled off for its dive before anyone was sure.

Then the gunners all started to yell and went into action. They'd been waiting a long time for something like this. The rest of the crew yelled too, with the excitement, but you couldn't hear them because the guns were squirting lead and hosing across the sky. I went up to the old man's room to make sure everything was ready, just in case we had to abandon; and then I went up on the navigation bridge.

Captain Menzies was standing by the telegraph, smoking his pipe and watching the plane. Mr. Tomkins, the mate, was by the helmsman and Mr. McCaffrey and the third were in the port wing looking through their glasses.

The Nip came down like an arrow and let go a bomb and then zoomed up and away and circled. The bomb was a bad miss way off to starboard and then, as the plane came back for a second try, the gunners got him.

He simply ran smack into it. You could see him stagger in mid-air and then smoke started coming out and we all cheered. Even the old man took off his cap and waved it, but the unexpected happened. I suppose the Jap pilot was already dead at the controls—it didn't look like a deliberate suicide job. The plane just kept on coming and it fell right into us. One wing hit the funnel and crumpled, and what was left of the plane scraped across the starboard bridge wing and there was a terrific explosion.

All I remember about it is that I was thrown from the chartroom door to the after end of the bridge. I came to pretty dazed but not badly hurt, my head stuck through some splintered wood and blood running all over me. By the time I got up things were pretty quiet. The guns had stopped and the wreck of the plane had plummeted straight into the sea. Curiously enough the ship itself wasn't injured much, but the navigation bridge looked like a butcher shop.

The helmsman was hanging over a mangled wheel—and he hadn't any head. Mr. Tomkins, the mate, was in a soggy huddle, dead at his feet. The third mate was sitting up and rubbing his head and groaning, while Mr. McCaffrey was swaying on his knees, his uniform half torn off, and he was swearing a blue streak.

Captain Menzies was flat on his face, but alive and moving a little, and I stumbled over and helped him get up. He had a lot of cuts and blood all over but he wasn't badly hurt.

"Oh, it's you, steward," he mumbled when I asked how he felt. "I—ah—" He brushed a hand over his eyes, shook his head a time or two, as if to clear it, and was quiet for so long I thought maybe he was going to faint. I was just about to duck below for the brandy when he said in a sort of funny voice, "Let me hold the rail, steward. I'm a bit dazed." So I steered him to the rail and he said quietly, "How are things now? Is the ship all right?" They always think of the ship first.

Someone, I think it was the gunnery officer, came falling up from the main deck, all jubilant. "Well, we got him, sir! Dead on! I hope . . ." He stopped as he saw the bridge and swallowed a little. "Hell," he said slowly. "I was going to report no bad damage. I'm—I'm sorry, sir. I thought that explosion went outboard."

The old man brushed his hands across his eyes again and then sort of waved. "Apparently not," he said dryly. "Er—steward. Just tell me what the damage is." So I checked things over and told him and then Mr. McCaffrey stopped swearing and took the old man's arm.

"Lucky for us there wasn't half a dozen of 'em, sir," he managed shakily. He looked pretty white and he wasn't so cocky now. "The mate"—he started to gag and then got over it—"the mate's dead, I guess. And the quartermaster. But I think the ship's all right."

"That's fortunate," said the old man huskily. "You're okay, Mr. McCaffrey?"

"A bit banged around and pretty mad, sir," the second reported. "But I guess okay."

"Well, take over for a while," said the old man, and then he got hold of my shoulder. "Steward, help me to the chartroom. I've got to do some thinking." Well, he

looked pretty bad and shaky, and I eased him to the chartroom settee, tossed a blanket over him and ducked below for some brandy and hot coffee and chased the messroom steward up with hot water and towels to get the old man cleaned up. He had his eyes closed when I got back and he was talking wearily to the second.

"If the ship isn't damaged we don't break radio silence," he said. "You understand?"

The second stood there biting his lip and dabbing at his cuts. "Yes, I understand, sir. But what if any more planes come along."

"That'll be different," said the old man, not opening his eyes. "We'll figure that one when we come to it. There's just a chance we were spotted by a stray and he might not have reported. Got to"—he coughed— "got to take a lot of chances in this war. Our job's Charns' Bay. How are we heading now?"

"Nowhere," said the second bluntly, "until we get the emergency steering rigged or the bridge wheel fixed." The old man lifted a hand and let it drop back, resigned.

"Well, do it and put her on her course. What was it?" He still seemed dazed and I was worried.

"Two-forty degrees, sir," said the second.

"And our position?" asked the old man. The second hesitated and the old man smiled faintly, his eyes still closed. "You're the navigator, mister. You ought to remember."

"Yes, sir," said the second. "Just a minute." He took a look at the chart and log and figured things out, and then asked sort of apologetically, "Would you like to see the chart yourself, sir?" The old man shook his head.

"I don't think I need it, mister. The chart's in my mind. Just keep her at two-forty until eight bells—no, make it one bell to allow for our stopping—then make the course two-thirty. Get another fix as soon as you can. And get the bridge cleaned up and back in shape."

The second didn't say a word, just sort of stumbled away, a bit stunned, I guess, at getting the whole ship pushed in his lap, and I heard him yelling for the bosun.

"Steward," the old man said, "I'll be staying up here from now on."

I said, "Listen, sir. You're not in such good shape. Let me get you in your bunk. You'll feel better, sir."

"Charns' Bay is tricky work," he said dryly, "even if we meet no more planes. So I'll stay, steward. I'll be all right."

AND that's the way it was. They buried the mate and quartermaster, and got the bridge fixed up pretty well, and the old *Bengal Pride* just snored along on her course, and the old man just stayed in the chartroom. Even after he was able to get up and around, he just lived there. I figured that was plain anxiety, or maybe Mr. McCaffrey was right and the old man was nuts. In fact, the skipper acted so queer at times I was sure he must be a bit off his beam. I went up with coffee around noon next day and he was standing at the for'ard rail and Mr. McCaffrey was holding out the old man's sextant.

"It's near time, sir," he was saying. "You'll want to get a shot." But the old man waved him away. "I'm still a bit shaky. You can handle it, mister." The second looked at him, puzzled, and I knew what he was thinking. It was the first time the old man hadn't taken his own noon sight, but of course the bombing had really jolted him. Anyway, Mr. McCaffrey shrugged and went ahead and when he reported the fix and a change of course the old man just nodded.

"That'll be good until two bells," he said. "Then shift her south six degrees."

For the first time since he had been aboard, the second was a bit embarrassed —he'd been tamed down some since the plane business had given him more responsibility. I guess, too, having to read the burial service for the mate and quartermaster had made him think. He rubbed his pug nose and scratched his red head and looked at the third mate and at me and then burst out: "Look, sir. I know you've had a bad jolt, and I don't want to argue, but don't you think six degrees extra south. . . If you'll look at the chart . . ."

The old man chewed on his pipe and shrugged. "You try and navigate this archipelago by the charts and you'll wind up in thirty fathoms," he said dryly. "Make it a six shift at two bells and work me a position right after."

"Yes, sir," said the second after a short silence, and as he walked back to the chart-room he brushed by me, made a circular motion with his finger around one ear and whispered, "Nuts! Absolutely nuts. He's running us right on Angers Reef." I just shrugged and he muttered irritably, "Oh, how the hell would *you* know? You're not a sailor!"

No, I wasn't and I'm not, but that remark got me thinking. It could be the old man had gone quite off-balance after that explosion. On the other hand he didn't sound or act too bad, but just after two bells, when we changed course, he grabbed my arm.

"Take a look in the rough log and see what the position is," he said. I stared at him. He was scarce ten feet from the chart-room and only had to step inside to see for himself.

I said, "But, sir, the second just gave you the position."

He shook me a bit and swore through clenched teeth. "I know. But, steward,"—he dropped his voice mysteriously—"I don't quite trust Mr. McCaffrey. You know—these youngsters. I just want a witness—in case—" I thought he certainly was off his head then, but I did what he asked and began to have a few new ideas myself.

Well, don't ask me about technical details. All I know is the old man kept me beside him practically night and day and I ran errands for him and even learned to read the compass card so I could report just what course we were holding. He kept insisting he didn't trust McCaffrey and wanted me as a witness just in case anything went wrong. McCaffrey was in a fog and I was pretty much with him. But what could the second do? The old man always seemed to be right. We threaded safely between islands that were just misty dots on the horizon, when, as I understood it, if we had held the chart course, we would have piled up.

"I quit," said the second to me once, slamming his cap on the chart table. The old man was out on the bridge at the time. "The pilot books say one thing and the charts agree and the old man tosses them all overside and still gets through."

"I wouldn't know, sir," I reminded him. "I'm not a sailor." And he snorted and said something about beginning to wonder about himself, too.

So, to make a long story short, we weren't bothered by any more planes and just plodded through green seas until one afternoon I heard the old man tell Mr. McCaffrey: "Around four bells you should sight a big, humped-up rock to port. Get a bearing and when you're full abeam make the course dead west."

"You'll be meaning Pyramid Rock, sir," said the second. "Charns' Bay's just off it. But the charts—well, not quite dead west, sir."

"You'd be surprised," said the old man with one of his wintry smiles. "I lost the bark *Caroline* in '24 because I didn't go dead west."

The second mate sounded as if he were strangling. "Well, it's your ship," he finally managed. "But I'm setting my protest down in the log. You've been right or lucky so far, but everything I've checked says south by west from Pyramid Rock to make Charns' Bay. Maybe you'd better disrate me. At least I'll keep my ticket clean, you—you—" He was so boiling over he couldn't finish, and Captain Menzies just stood at the for'ard rail and bit on his pipe so hard the muscle knots stood out on his jaw.

"We'll keep your ticket clean," he said tensely. "The course is dead west, as soon as we're abeam. I'll make the log entry myself." The second walked to the port bridge wing, stiff-backed and swearing to himself, but I could see he wasn't quite sure. He knew he was right about the charts and the books, but the old man had been right too and it was a toss-up. But at the last analysis the *Bengal Pride* was the old man's ship and his personal grief. Still, for the first time, I felt a bit sorry for the second and I got my first hunch about all our trouble.

In any event, we went dead west after getting Pyramid Rock abeam, and about an hour later the old man told the third to stop the ship. "Mr. McCaffrey," he called, and the second came surlily alongside him. "If you look ahead you should see a high headland to starboard and a swampy sort of mangrove mess to port."

"Sure, I see them," said the second shortly. "Who couldn't? So what do we do now? Go dead east?" He was pretty sarcastic.

The old man ignored him. "The entrance is about six hundred yards wide," he said slowly. "Please listen very carefully, Mister. The only sure channel is to port. Bring the ship head-on to the big hill you'll see ashore inside the bay. Then make the course south by west as soon as you clear the headland. The coral used to block you about a quarter of a mile in, but according to my figuring and from what I've heard it's been smashed out."

"Which means," said the second dryly, "I might as well forget the chart altogether."

"Exactly," said the old man. "From now on I regret to say it's up to you. You'll go in dead slow, standing by both anchors just in case, and with men in both chains. You'll go straight until you are fore-and-aft with the headland and the hill and then you can anchor. If I'm wrong you won't need to anchor. You'll be aground."

"Just like that," the second choked. "Shoving a wild job on me. By-guess-and-by-God stuff, eh. Well, whyn't you take her in yourself! I—"

He checked as the same hunch dawned on him that had been dawning on me. The old man reached out and patted his arm, smiling a little, "You're a good man, McCaffrey, even if we don't get along. I could take you through the archipelago because I had the chart in my mind and a little searoom, but now it's a harbor job—and—a skipper has to be able to see in close quarters."

I got it then, of course, and so did the second. He went white as a ghost and stared at the old man as if he'd never seen him before. He even had to hang on the rail to steady himself.

"So you're blind," he managed at last. "I ought to have known. The way we've been running—the chart in your mind. . . . I don't know what to say!"

Well, the old man got in *his* dig then. "No, it's something you'd hardly find in the books," he said humorously. "I guess the explosion did something to my eyes. But, you see, I didn't need the books to manage. And the charts were no good, anyway. I'd already had the experience. . . . Now take over, McCaffrey. And be careful. Remember, she's still my ship."

"Yes, sir," said the dazed second, and he looked at me and bit his lip. I could see the slow, tight change come into his face as he really became an officer. "Hell," he said thickly. "Hell! And I thought I could navigate!"

Then he started giving orders and we went in. I got back to the chartroom with coffee and sandwiches after a while. Captain Menzies was sitting on the settee, chewing on his pipe and staring sightless at the bulkhead opposite. He laughed a little as he heard the anchor go down, sure and safe in fifteen clean-swept fathoms, just as he had figured.

"Get me the log book, steward," he said gently. "And a pencil. I'll make one last entry myself. You know, a fellow likes to report he got his ship in."

I said, "Yes, sir," and Mr. McCaffrey spoke from the doorway. "One thing I'd like, too, sir," he said slowly, and a bit huskily. "Can I sign that entry?"

SO YOU see what I mean about not being sure if this is Captain Menzies' story or Mr. McCaffrey's. They're both sailors and I'm not.

But I do know the second got his experience and I do know the old man was right. You don't get it out of books. You have to pay for it. And the price is time.

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by Gordon MacCreagh

Simon waded out cutlass high, throwing a wave before his waist. . . .

MATT HARLAN, being a person of the lower classes in the very caste-conscious pre-revolution Boston, had no business to lay rude hands upon one of the gentry. Yet, as a sturdy blacksmith, with a spirit that smoldered under the conditions, when the Honourable Eustace Wherry struck him across the cheek with his cane, Matt picked him up as easily as he would a hundred of iron and slung him into the low tide mud off of Benning Old Stairs.

For this enormity he was allowed his choice, according to the justice of the colony, of five years in jail or—not much better—an equal period of bonded indenture to the Honourable's Uncle. Uncle Euclid

A Novelette of Desperate Men

Wherry who condoned his own lack of title by the quite respectable business of amassing a fortune, buying at under-the-fence prices the pirate loot that was gathered to the fabulous Port Royal of Jamaica and of selling it most profitably to other merchants in England who were able to shut their eyes to whatever might happen in those backward colonies.

As a bonded prentice Matt had again no business to lay hands upon Uncle Euclid's daughter Eulalia. Yet when she slapped him across the cheek he lifted her buxom weight in his two hands and kissed her full and soundly upon her lips.

At this enormity Eulalia kicked furiously at his shins. Yet she let her goldy tomboy curls flood over his face before she gasped her head away and choked out, "I'll scream. Let me down, you great man thing, you. I'll tell Papa and he'll have you whipped—Quick, idiot! Here he comes now."

Papa was always just coming. He watched his girl as a valuable property with a high business value. Matt let her down and she skipped clear.

"What now? What goes, Lally girl?" Papa shuffled his long pointed shoes into the counting house, peering suspiciously. "What happens here? To your rooms, wench. England for you before you're spoilt merchandise. . . . And as for you, my bold cockerel, away with you. To the smithy, and get out those iron bands for the chests that go to England with next sailing of the Royal James."

Lally went obediently to her rooms.

Matt went obediently down the hill to the town's smithy. But, disobediently, he didn't set to work immediately on iron bands. He worked, rather, on his new sword blade.

There, as he wrought his cunningest on the steel according to the new French pattern, he felt the shrewd gaze of Captain Trelawn on his back. He had no wish to speak with the man, who carried a still raw scar across his nose and lips. Matt had enough hell of his own. It was more than likely Trelawn packed the devil on his back.

"Ha!" Trelawn said. "The blacksmith!"

Matt savagely fitted his new blade to its pommel. Not clinching the tang yet, he tested the thing for balance and swing.

"Needs more weight in the guard, I'd say," Trelawn criticized. "Better to take a heavy glissade. Though 'tis a newfangled shape to me." He spat on the hard-packed earthen floor and grimaced his disgust at Matt. "Look at yourself now, lad: Ye drive a man fair to vomit."

The big muscles across Matt's shoulders tensed. The heart-sickness that had been smouldering in him grew to a flare of rebellion so visible that Trelawn could see it. He snorted.

"A brawny lad with two good hands—and he remains a bonded prentice clerk in a merchant's warehouse. A slave ye are, Harlan! A slave to a milk-fed pasty-face who'd wet his hose if a parrot back-talked him."

Matt took a single smooth step forward. The point of his blade dented Trelawn's woven red shirt front.

Trelawn didn't move. He laughed and spat over the blade onto the floor again. "So why not listen to sense, as many a bold lad has done afore ye, and take the high seas runaway wi' me?"

Matt scowled at the tempter. He wrenched out his blade's tang, went back to the anvil, hammered at the thin steel.

Trelawn scratched the lower end of his scar. He watched Matt. "Lad—why not?"

Matt rather discussed his blade. "You'll note it departs from the full curve of the cutlass that's good only for the hacking swing. This has but a slight curve to give good cutting edge, yet allows use of the much faster point. 'Tis the new trick of fence. A sabre, the French call it."

The tempter hummed the pirate song: *" 'Weaklings can sow what the strong may reap. And he can have who best can keep.'* Come, lad. I lodge at Leper Dick's next to the Seagul bawdy, while my sloop careens to patch waterline shots. And glad I'll be to ship the likeliest recruit in all Caribee."

"To hang? Like many another."

Trelawn laughed at the renewed rhythm of Matt's hammer. "Look'ee, lad. Take a breather."

Matt straightened, flung his hammer at the work bench. "All right," he said. "Speak it out."

Trelawn's eyes lighted. Wrinkles forked from their corners. He straddled the big anvil. Matt couldn't help liking the fellow. There was rogue, hell-and-high-water in his eyes.

"Boston was never a place for ye," Trelawn coolly diagnosed. "And it seems Port

Royal's not much better. 'Tis well known what ye did to get shipped here, and a rare tale it is. And then, jail or slavery being choic, what did ye, ye mucklehead, do? Took five years o' bondage." Trelawn stood, slammed his indignant fist on the work bench. "Laws of the Colonies! Colonies bedamned! This is Jamaica, where the law winks at a bold sea rover so long as his goods bring profit to the fat merchants who rule. So who's the worse? Rover or merchant?"

Matt wondered why he let the man go on. Another he would have thrown on his face in the road. Rogue this one was, but he argued a specious right. Trelawn added a warning.

"I overheard Bull Frankie baiting ye, Harlan. A Froggie toy, he called your new blade and he bragged to his crew he'd bait ye yet to prove it against cutlass. Better ye'd be away before that happens."

"You'll not scare me away, Cap'n Trelawn," Matt growled, "even with Bull Harlan's name."

With savage hammer strokes Matt fitted tang to hilt, smashed off the end and peened it smooth. He cut whistling arcs through the air, feinted into the shadows of the shop, cut fast at the anvil stump by Trelawn's legs, parried on the turn of the wrist. The blade was a joy to his hand.

He saw Trelawn stiffen, heard his quick. "Watch ye yourself now I warned ye!"

BULL FRANKIE, at the door with his sycophant crew, was a gorilla of a man who aped the ferocity of the lately famous Captain Blackbeard by wearing his own beard in pointed curls. It was his reputation's need to show that the arm behind the sword was what counted.

His bull voice bellowed, "Ha! Our young spriggand has his froggie sticker finished, eh? Ready for deeds, I warrant."

Matt's savage rebellion against all conditions of life glowered from his face. Frankie had built his reputation on cutting the glower out of faces.

"Or would he rather fence wi' a tree?"

Frankie's crew guffawed. Matt smouldered, said, "I'll prove the blade. On wood— or bull beast."

Frankie roared huge amusement. "Damn and sink me. The cocatrice's asking for a slitting. Out then! Out in the street!"

Among these reckless men who lived their lives at death's elbow, it was all that was needed to flare into a duel. The gang trooped away, shouting. Loungers gathered.

"Beware of him," Trelawn told Matt quickly. "He's got a mean reputation as a boarder and fighter on a cluttered ship's deck. Bull he is and charges like a mad one."

Matt's rising fury scarcely heard him, but he knew this would be no punctilious duel on some quiet greensward, with seconds and a physician and gentlemen meticulously stripped to ruffled shirts.

This was a ring of shouting men on a dirt roadway. Men whose lives were a series of duels. Personal perhaps. Over a keg of rum. Or *en masse* over the side of a ship.

Some strolled from taverns. Frowzy women hung out of shutterless windows. Some on the road clamored for chairs to stand on.

Suddenly Captain Trelawn shouted, "Hold awhile, hearties. There's many o' Bull's crew. Wait'll I summon some o' my lads to see they fight rules."

"Aye, rules!" the mob yelled. "Let 'em fight rules. No blood grudge here."

"God's name. Let the lad have rules," Frankie bellowed. "What'll ye have, cockerel? Blade and knife? Or bare knife? Or blade alone? Pick your own plaguey rules."

As though rules could make it less deadly.

Matt's voice was thin. "It's the blade you brag to prove, right?"

"Blade be it, then. Have at ye."

Bull rushed in, swung a vast sweep at Matt's head. Matt parried in *tierce*, taking it low on the *forte* of his blade. For an instant there was the opportunity to flick the point down across Bull's face.

Matt let it go. Better to be wary of whatever fast defense this reputed fighter might have. It seemed he had none.

One—two. The up-down of the slashing cutlass drill was Bull's method. That and his brute strength. And the weight of a practised arm.

Up—down. Front swipe. Back slash. Frankie hewed at Matt. One hard blow after the other. With never a thought of parrying in return. As methodical, Matt

thought, as whipping a horse to make it run. That's how this gross creature slaughtered. By sheer rush and roar, beating his opponent to dizziness under relentless steel.

The Portugee fencing master for whom Matt mended swords had told him all about this style of rush and slash fighting and had laughed at it.

Prime. Septime. Tierce. Matt fenced the great slashes off. He was feeling his own new blade a joy in his fist. The balance was perfection. Weighted just enough to take the clubbed swings of a seven-pound cutlass. Not too heavy to allow fast parry and cut.

Matt knew he could fence that clumsy cutlass and think of return. Maybe he wouldn't have to kill the man, though Bull's kind would fight on, like a bull, so long as his heart held blood.

"A wager!" somebody shouted. "Fifty pieces the smith takes 'im!"

Frankie's crew drowned out other takers. "Fifty it be, Long Dick! I'll double— ye willing."

"Ring o' fine diamond to Bull's back! Who takes me at a hundred pieces?"

"Thirty doubloons, Dingo. The smith's my man."

"One piece of eight on Bull!" a humorist shouted. The crowd roared delight.

It maddened the bull. His lips curled from teeth as yellow as an ape's. He broke rules, drew his long knife. He hurled all his weight at Matt to hack with both hands.

Matt caught the great swipe at his waistline in the *sixte* parry. There was no fooling with this kind of attack. He flicked his point up on the back-hand for the cut at his opponent's face.

It slashed Bull from chin, diagonally across his face to gash the other eyebrow.

Matt stepped back. Blinded by blood, the insensate animal should have enough. But Bull earned his name. He bellowed and charged.

He smashed Matt's blade aside with a vicious whirling swipe, rushed in close and stabbed at Matt's belly with his knife. Matt just caught his wrist. His blade locked with Bull's, overhead. Steel clanged.

This had been Bull's victory stroke against any who really fought back. Bear a man down to deck boards by sheer hurtling weight. Finish him off from on top. His one bloodshot eye glared astonishment. For once he'd met a man who didn't fall before his rush.

"Stand to un, smith!" a man yelled. "Ecod! He holds the Bull like a ship's bollard."

Matt's hand showed what smithy work could do—what being a prentice clerk could ruin. His strength twisted at the dagger wrist, forced it up. Slowly, against Bull's straining fury. Up to shoulder height.

And then—sharply down! A bone snapped. The dagger fell.

Somebody swore.

The Bull, unbeaten, uncowed, spat his fury into Matt's face. Chewed tobacco juice stung Matt's eyes. The Bull shoved his nauseous curled beard to Matt's throat and bit.

Not a bull now. A snarling, savage wolf. Matt tasted blood.

Then his long-pent resentment at the unfairness of this gross brute—at the unfairness of all the conditions of his life—of the whole world, exploded in him.

He shoved Bull's heavy cutlass away in a rasping *disengage,* slashed his own blade down in the diagonal drawing reverse. It sliced through Bull's collar bone, bit into his upper ribs, through the leather cross belt and softly smoothly down into his waist.

Matt stepped back again. His nostrils wrinkled to lift his upper lip and showed teeth red with the other man's blood that had flowed from the slashed cheek and brow to retch him.

Bull stood for a drunkenly swaying second, then dropped on his face. Blood gushed in pulsing throbs from both sides of his body. A mangy, starved mongrel dog, stalked up to the felled man, sniffed tentatively, hunkered back and howled.

"Gawdy! Butchered from chin to brisket!"

"So that'll be fifty pieces," Long Dick said coolly. "Who was it wagered me there?"

"And the diamonds, me fine bucko. Come over!"

Some of Bull's crew tried to lift him. They dropped him again. "He'll need a barrow."

Some of them, with the callousness of their kind just shrugged. "A new skipper for us." And they looked at Matt with no more than brute curiosity.

Matt stood off from the shapeless hulk that was the proof of his swordsmanship, panting, staring at the crimson gleam on his new blade. He bent to wipe it in the less dreadful mud, when a something smashed with shrewd calculation behind his ear. He dropped more suddenly than had the Bull.

CHAPTER 2

DARKNESS ebbed away from Matt in rocking throbs. Pain came in waves and surged dizzily back as though he were on a boat. He moved his head. The night swooped back in twinkling lights. It ebbed again in a long-drawn tide. His whole being heaved and rolled— and, by all the gods, he *was* on a boat!

He shored himself up on one elbow. It buckled under him. But his eyes could stay open. He could see the carlines of a small cabin. Light came through a ragged shot hole in the deck house.

A voice shouted.

The companionway darkened to a figure stooping in. And there was Captain Trelawn.

"Aha!" Trelawn was extraordinarily cheerful. "Right as a bell— almost. And safe at sea."

Matt's senses drifted back to him. Blood pounded in his head.

"Foul dogs! Did Frankie's crew gang me?"

Captain Trelawn shook his head and grinned. "Truth is, lad—'twas myself did ye the friendly deed. Hit ye and carried ye off in my fine fast sloop, the *Hawk*."

Matt blinked at him. "A friendly deed?"

"Aye, so. Not that I think Bull Frankie's crew would've molested you." He chuckled. "A rare stroke. More than myself is convinced to your new Frenchie blade. I picked it up, by the way, and it's safe for ye, so's ye can teach me some o' that skill o' fence. I feared for your comfort at the hands of Port Royal's lawful marshals."

"My comfort? I fought fair."

"Ah! Were ye one of us, you might blithely fight one day. But as a bonded prentice you've no right to do save as your master says. Whipped ye'd have been like a slave. So I picked ye up and away to sea."

Matt managed to sit up, swaying, but angry. "Be damned to ye, Trelawn! A foul trick!"

Matt saw the picture. Pirates were always in need of recruits. Some they found ashore simply by flaunting finery, free-spending before men who, like Matt, resented the class privileges of the gentry. Some they forced from captured ships. Either or else. Some they kidnapped as callously as did the Navy's press gang.

"So you still want me to join up?" Matt stubbornly shook his head—and sprawled flat as lights whirled sickeningly in his head.

"Lay and think it out, lad." Trelawn grinned confidently. "If not this day, then the next. We're to rendezvous. Ye'll have time. Remember, I've done ye a friend's service. Left ashore, ye'd have been whipped. Think on't. The cook's mate'll bring ye some slumgullion."

Matt had time to think. The sloop *Hawk* tacked into the northeast trades, fitful now with squall flurries. Under main, topsail and two jibs, she slipped through clean blue water with a smooth speed pirates must have or die.

The *Hawk* wasn't large. Sixty feet overall, Matt judged, carrying a long tom and two nine-pounder carronades.

Yet nineteen men crowded her. Comfort was non-existent, cleanliness unnecessary. Water in twin butts lashed to the mast was for sparse drinking, not washing, and was so foul only disinfection with rum made it potable.

Food was turtle meat and such fresh fish as might be caught—and *buccan*, the smoked beef that gave their names to the earlier buccaneers—all boiled together occasionally in slumgullion. For green food to fend scurvy pirates relied on periods ashore.

The crew slept, during good weather, on deck, among live turtles on their backs, their snapping beaks lashed with twine. When it rained, they crammed into the deck house cabin that stank only less foul than the foc'sle.

Matt's position was anomalous— not of the crew, yet not prisoner. He was free so far as a sixty-foot sloop offered. Trelawn remained friendly and persuasive. He was convinced Matt would "see sense" and join up.

"Enough thought, Matt. Sign the tally.

I'll book ye for supercargo—that'll give ye fair double share of what we take."

"Besides shot and shell," Matt said with a grin, "how little might that be?"

"Five times as much in one haul as five years o' slaving to a master ashore."

"Little enough at that."

"Five times? I spoke the fool. More like a hundred. Matt—we're to a wolf fleet rendezvous called by Cap'n Lew Lucifer on Little Inagua Cay. Brother to the devil and as cunning. He's got a great venture to hand and a score or so of vessels like the *Hawk*—we can't but win."

"Though some will sink."

"Aye. But as free men they'll sink, then. Which, lad, to the minds of some is better than being whipped as prentice slave."

Matt grimaced over the reminder. But he shook his head. "Inagua is a long tack from England."

Trelawn could wait. "Come, then, show me a stroke or two o' that Frenchie blade. A little fence."

"Man, you'll need a Frenchie sabre with a balance."

"Nine bells o' hell, lad! At Inagua we'll set up forge and ye'll make me one."

LITTLE Inagua Cay was one of God's little lost green places where every prospect pleased and only men, when they came, were vile. Coconut-fringed, woodsy-hilled, with clear spring water not a quarter mile from the beach, and a sheltered lagoon for safe anchorage. Timbers of a great Spanish ship almost blocked the entrance.

The wolf pack was gathering. Two slim sloops and a long low pinkie and a fat brig with the cut of a Dutchman were there.

Captain Trelawn, tacking for the opening, fired a gun to port. The pinkie fired one to starboard—the signal that all was clear.

These ships flaunted no flag—they had no country. Skull and crossbones were flown only on a long stern chase for warning a victim to heave to.

Greetings were shouted to Trelawn. Men ashore yelled to come join the *barbecoa* of wild pig.

Nobody knew when Captain Lucifer would arrive. Nobody knew Lucifer's secret plan. And while they waited, the men caroused. Rum and dice, not sea-bathing, were their sole relaxation on a golden tropical beach. They brought barrels ashore, dipped liquor by the cupful. Between blackouts they diced for whatever another might have. For their jewelry. Each other's weapons. For whatever women or loot one might draw on the next raid.

And there was never a question that commitments wouldn't be paid. Pack law called for honor among thieves.

Matt found among the *Hawk's* crew a wiry little man who'd been a poacher of landed gentry's wild game in England. Penalty, deportation. Little Dickie Jenks, then, was on his way to the Australian penal colony of Botany when his prison ship was liberated by pirates. He had joined the free rovers, and now was grateful for Matt's amused friendship.

More lean ships came. Then finally the much touted Lucifer surged through the cove's narrows on the crest of a squall in a high topsail schooner. Matt noted Lucifer pulled an oar with his men as they beached.

Cap'n Lew Lucifer, so far from the dirty finery affected by others, went to the opposite extremes of costume. A great devil of a man, big-boned, big-muscled, big-toothed, with a chunk of his nose smashed awry, he sported thick gold wire, like curtain rings, in his ears. Eyes the color of rich rum glinted alertly over the motley mob. On his head he wore a twist of woolen bunting, turbanlike, red and blue striped. Across shoulder and chest was a six-inch leather sword belt, into which were looped a pistol and long-handled Arab knife. Below a yellow sash was slung a naked, oversize cutlass.

Lucifer's voice was a startling squeak. "How many have made port?" Matt noticed a white scar across the mahogany of his throat. "Three and a half score? By God and Satan, it's enough. Black Caesar'll be coming yet and Red Trig wi' fifty more. But enough." He paused, while the men held their breath. "So, here's our venture. . . . The brig *Royal James* sails the Wind'ard Passage within this week. Bound for England."

The men whistled avid excitement.

The *Royal James!* Matt slumped on a log beside the barbeque fire, stubbornly unwilling to join in the cheering. He stared at this great devil of a Lucifer. Blood surged to break a sweat on his face. Matt shoved men aside in the mob, searching for Captain Trelawn.

The mob gave no thought to the *James'*

strength, but Lucifer had. "Brig o' nigh twelve hundred ton she is— armed to four twelve-pounders broadside, and an eighteen-pound stern chaser wi' a dozen o' King's Navee and a crew complete o' three full watches. Seventy-two men."

The men registered no alarm. Lucifer fed them meat. "Laden wi' half the merchandise out o' Port Royal warehouses. Bound for home; and where did they get this honest merchandise?"

Reply came howling. "From us. From the likes of us. At cut-throat price." The mob growled.

"Right as the devil lives. Who'll take it all back?"

The mob was incoherent. It was a great joke and they shouted laughter.

"Aye, and sell it again." Lucifer mounted a rum barrel to make his squeak heard. "Sell it again where?"

The mob held its breath.

"In Colony ports, me lads. That's where!"

The wolves howled delight. Captain Lucifer got down off the rum barrel. With a thrust of his great foot he pushed it over, kicked in its head. Liquor gushed, made pungent mud.

"So then no more o' this." Lucifer's squeak was as thin as a file. "Not till we divide man to man. We sail today to lie up for her at Ambergris banks. Dutchie Troomp leads her in his fast pinkie, hull down. He'll bring word. We'll out an' take her as wind and weather run."

MATT found Trelawn. "I've decided," he told him unconditionally. "I'll join up and sign the tally."

Trelawn grinned, shook Matt's hand. "I knew it, lad. Soon as the old devil got to telling about easy pickin's."

Matt didn't argue. He drew Trelawn away. "Richer plunder, my friend, than ever Lucifer knows. Listen to me now. My late master ships on this packet his daughter to England to marry a Lord."

Trelawn saw the possibilities at once. "So m'lord pays a worthy ransom for the wench."

"The lord hasn't a penny. But Wherry is the richest merchant in Royal. His daughter's bait to hook him entry into gentility." Matt told of the dowry; a chest enclosed in a common valise—a king's ransom in jewels.

Trelawn whistled. "Lad, I said it. The likeliest recruit in all Caribee."

Matt felt sure he could trust Trelawn. "Let us of the *Hawk* hold together. We'll fight only to win to the cabin. Take the lass safe and her iron chest, if nothing else. Let it be our plunder and let us claim it at the dividing to the sacrifice of all else."

Trelawn sucked in his lips, nodded. "Right. And I'll claim this wench, among all others, to my particular fancy."

Matt thrust a fierce finger to the man's chest. "No!" He thumbed his own. "To *my* fancy."

Trelawn roared laughter, clapped Matt's shoulder. "I thought so! Well, lad, you're not a one whom I'll ever challenge to fight for her."

The wolves might not drink, but they could howl the roistering songs that let off steam. Those who just had to have liquor to keep their blood flowing in their veins had sense enough, under Captain Lucifer's diabolic efficiency, to row to their ships under pretext of bringing out their mates for a last fill-up on fresh meat. The mates would have sense enough to leave the drunks behind.

They brought back a fiddler and to his scratchy accompaniment they enquired in raucous disharmony. *"What shall we do with a drunken sailor?"* and the chorus howled that they should, *"Put 'im in a longboat and let 'im bail her,"* and so through the interminable verses of every lecherous thing that a drunken sailor might do.

They sang to the long heaving swing of a halyard chantey, *"Maudie, Royal Bawdy,"* and their newest one, a quick-trotting capstan chantey:

As I was a'rovin' the Caribee—
High winds for Royal.
The Devil popped out of the boiling sea—
Hull down for Royal.
He boarded by the beam and he
scuttled for the galley.
He sat on the stove and he signed
up the tally.
Hell's loose in Royal

They stamped the rhythm of the refrain lines as they bawled their various tuneless responses.

We came by a ship that was tall
in the sheer—
High winds for Royal
We boarded by the bow and we swept
it clear—
Hull down for Royal.
We won to the waist as pretty as you wish.
The captain was from Navy so we threw'm
to the fish.
Hell's afloat in Royal.

That one, too, went brassily on as long as the recitalist could improvise verses of exploit. Until they—

Come by a frigate that had fifty guns—
Then the devil dived overboard and,
Sing your last, my bullies, for this'll be
your knell.
I'll never say good-by for I'll see you
all in hell.
All hell's ablaze in Royal.

With the out-tide the fleet took off and slipped eastward for the long, palm-fringed strip of Ambergris behind which masts could hide. The drogher, having the tallest sticks to drive her, resorted to the simple old trick of lashing a brace of palm tops to her topmasts.

The days were fast going when sea rovers cruised in big slow ships, captured great galleons, and then plodded along in them, hoping to smash resistance by sheer weight of guns. Speed was the trick now. Small, fast boats that could, if necessary in a doldrum calm, even be rowed with great sweeps to surround a helpless ship. Speed and shallow draft that could avail itself of short cuts over the spreading flats of tropic archipelagos.

Trelawn and Matt briefed their crew. "Cabins for the quality will all be to the stern. We'll maneuver to run in under gun depression and grapple aft. Stick close and win through to companion head. The half of us hold clear passage an' the t'other fight to the one purpose to lift the lass and her luggage and away back to our ship. Hold her safe and there'll be damsite more in her ransom than in our split o' cargo."

"Aye, if none others out o' Royal know who she be."

"Who'd know but supercargo? Yon fat merchant kept his girl well hid up-hill from ever a sight of rovers. Dirty her face and if needs must, give her a mite o' cut over one eye to hide wi' a mort o' bandage, and she's just another wench that's took the smith's fancy—and any that wants to fight un for her can."

It was a cold sober and consequently very much on edge fleet that hid at Ambergris Cay. They prepared guns, swore in the rain, waited.

Dutchy Troomp's pinkie scuttered in before a squall to report. "*James* comin' up close behind. Should make pass by noon."

Lucifer scanned the sky and swore at the gods of rain to cease their bedevilment.

A lookout skinned down from his high palm and hailed. "Brig's to'gallans'ils heavin' up to s'uthard!"

Lucifer's strategy was shouted from ship to ship. "Leave her pass on this wind. Then chase. Catch her in Turk Island passage where she'll not be able to change course account o' shoals."

The brig labored up against north-east wind, gleaming and white. Astoundingly clean, Matt mused, in comparison to the wolf fleet. His attention was strained on the tiny square windows of the cabins.

The ship passed on. Captain Lucifer blasted on a conch shell. The wolves streaked for their prey, low-bellied, long, unkempt.

And the brig could but stand on course, pray for a stronger wind.

CHAPTER 3

MEN scurried on the *Royal James'* decks. The brig's stern-chaser coughed a black cloud, wind-whipped like a funeral pall. Its eighteen-pound round ball splashed a geyser yards from Lucifer's yawl in the lead. The pack howled.

Now Lucifer ran up his own flag—a whole white skeleton on a black field.

Black clouds above brought a sprinkle of rain. Again the wolves yelled. The brig couldn't fire aft with broadside carronades, and in a rain even the stern chaser was handicapped, for with wet powder it was doomed to silence. Her men held screening canvas. At length the gun bellowed again. A wet burp rather than a shot. They watched the ball come. Men on Dutchy's drogher began to curse before it crunched into the ship's waist. The drogher lagged.

Matt prayed the upper winds might hold and the brig sail clear. The *Hawk* was close enough, so he could hear and watch Lucifer's fury as he tried to shield touch-

hole and fire his own gun. A ball slitted the brig's mizzen topsail. Accuracy with smooth-bore cannon was a matter of luck.

Lucifer leaped up and down. He cursed capstan, rain, everything. "The masts!" he shrilled. "Cut her hell-b'damned masts!"

Matt's heart was sick. Any one of those random balls, fired with loose-guessed powder, might fall low and plow into the after cabins where the passengers huddled.

Trelawn jogged Matt to one side. "Why so glum, man? Look what's a'comin' up behind."

Matt whirled, saw a long line of black squall rushing against the higher winds.

"God's gift!" Trelawn exulted. "So then she's ours."

"Or the devil's."

It would take fifteen minutes to get a full-rigged brig squared away. Men could be seen frantically scurrying. Rain lashed from the sky like bullets.

"Sheets!" Trelawn yelled. "Give 'em all you've got!! Spill it! Let the others by. We're for the stern."

The *Hawk* slowed. She dipped her head to full jibs, spilling wind from her main. All the other craft were racing for the brig's waist where the rail was lowest.

Howling, cutlasses in hand, cursing useless pistols, they ran close alongside, under the broadside guns. Their masts crunched against the guns as their craft heeled to the rush of men on the near side.

Grapple hooks snaked over. The brig's rail bristled wtih cutlasses and boarding pikes. Fire pots dropped, scattered burning sulphur. Pirates stamped them, kicked frantically. Some sputtered out. Some exploded. Pirate limbs lifted red in the streaming air. Pirates hacked upward at the rail. Pirates spidered up their own ratlines, flung themselves at the rail. Pirates scrambled through gun-ports. Rain drummed, tried to drown out the screaming hell.

The *Hawk* ran up by the stern of the *Royal James*. It was high above her deck. Trelawn coolly hurled a grapple through a cabin window. Somebody hooked a rope ladder into the mizzen shrouds. Matt flung the man aside, climbed first. Most fighting was farther forward. Two men ran, hacking at Matt. He slashed a face open. Then he was aboard, driving men before him. The *Hawk's* men shouted.

Fighting was a devil's riot all along the brig's waist. Steel it was. Pistols were useless. Cutlass, hanger, knife and pike. Hell's fury of cursing, hacking men.

The stout fellow who still opposed Matt's sword turned and ran for greater safety in the general melee. A steward crouched at the companionway, white-faced, weaponless. Matt leaped, caught a fistful of the man's jacket, tumbled with him down brass-bound steps.

"Mistress Wherry's cabin. Which? Quick, or I'll slit you!"

Six stuffy cabins opened off either side of the salon. The man choked out a number. He was rolled and trampled by the rush of Hawk men.

All the cabin doors were locked. Screams shrilled from some, prayers from others. It seemed the only silence was in the number given by the steward. Matt smashed against the door.

It splintered. And there stood Eulalie Wherry.

She held a pistol in her hand, pointed at Matt's belly. Her eyes widened as she recognized him. Then she pulled the trigger.

Matt had already moved, but the ball couldn't miss all men at the door. Somebody shrieked.

Matt bundled the girl into his arms. She beat at his face with the pistol. Matt grinned to the pain of it.

"Leave it, lass. Let be! We'll have you safe in a jiffy. Be quick. Your valises. In which one the dowry?"

She beat him with her fists. "You pirate beast— you!" But her involuntary glance indicated the treasure.

Trelawn was among those who jammed the cabin. "Out lads! A rare spitfire you've picked, Matt. Out with her! Bring the box. Bring all of 'em. Who knows where what's hid?"

Matt lifted the kicking, scratching girl, raced for the deck. Hell still howled amidships. He rushed to the rail, pushed her into the arms of Trelawn, jumped for the side and down the rope ladder. Standing wide-legged on the *Hawk's* deck, he shouted, "Throw her!"

Trelawn hoisted her to the rail and threw.

She screamed. Her hands clutched at her skirt as it flared open, revealing full-curved, cream-skinned legs. She struck Matt. Both rolled to the farther scupper. Matt's face bled from a rasp against coiled cable. He limped as he rushed the girl, still screaming, into the deck house cabin.

Men tumbled after him.

Trelawn was coolly alert. None of this was new to him. "You best stay guard her, Dickie Jenks. And you, Thorpe, lash her teasing limbs, lest the spitcat beat the twain o' ye. Rest of ye up an' back to the fight before some say we didn't do our share." He stopped, shot a warning finger at the two men. "And it's guard, I said. This is valuable property to be ransomed. Not spoilt!"

Matt had to go with them. Now, more than ever, he had to establish himself as somebody in this wolf pack. His heart wasn't in it. But the pirate verse was real reminder now, of his need: *He can have who best can keep.* . . .

He climbed back to the *Royal James'* deck, ferociously set on keeping what he had.

Men hacked at him with clumsy weapons. It sickened him to parry wide swings and drive his blade into soft bodies with first *riposte*. Lashing rain washed his blade clean as he snatched it clear to turn and face another who hewed at him. The thing was mechanical against shipmen who'd been trained to handle ropes and oars, not sword.

He was at the foot of the wheel house. There, unexpectedly, was a swordsman, one of the ship's officers, a long straight rapier in his hand. Two pirates coughed out pierced lungs before him. Three others bayed, wary of that beam of light.

Captain Lucifer was spewed out of the vortex. Confidently croaking thin derision, he lunged to hew the man in half. The swordsman parried and shot a lightning thrust at Lucifer's throat. Lucifer's white scar had taught him that stroke. Cat fast, he jerked back. But the length of the rapier very nearly finished his career. The point darted into his wide-open, chittering mouth and showed six inches of red steel through his cheek.

HERE was Matt's chance to win attention. Lucifer bled and gibbered and Matt shoved in front of him.

"The smith!" a hysterical voice shouted. "The smith o' Royal!"

This was no place for duel of skill. Matt feinted to the face, invited the high *riposte* in *prime*. It was a flash of light. Matt took the point in *seconde* close to his hilt. He wrapped his blade over and down the other in rasping disarmament. The rapier flew whirling over milling heads.

The officer caught his tingling wrist. Matt stepped back, unconsciously making the half-salute of fencing punctilio. The circling wolves had never heard of this respite to disarmed foe. They howled past Matt—hewed the weaponless man down.

The decks were a slaughter-house sight. Dead men lay about in huddled shapelessness. Wounded men crawled, sat, or staggered. Whole men glared, still in blood frenzy, for foe. Some turned bodies over with a careless foot, searching for rings, and ear pendants. Over such trifles they snarled at one another. Rain made rivers through blood pools.

Lucifer, carelessly letting his cheek bleed, strode enormously among them. He squeaked his blasphemies, shoved, cursed, attempted to build order from hell's aftermath. He knew one way.

"The gunners!" he croaked. "King's Navee men. Up and over with 'em!"

It was the wolf rule. The pack howled to the popular order. Only four of the blue uniforms were able to stand. Shouting laughter, the pack pitched them overboard. Others, dead or wounded, followed.

Sharks with the devilish telepathy of their kind, splashed and drove for sudden feed.

The remaining crew, barricaded or hidden, would be attended to later. Some would be given choice of signing up or killed wholesale— or perhaps marooned on some lone cay.

The men began to attend to their own wounded. First aid consisted of crude bandages to stop bleeding. There was no doctor, no surgeon.

Lucifer squeaked his orders. "Every ship lends a third o' crew. With what we drag out of holes here we'll have enough to man the brig an' sail her back to Inagua cove for division. Shake a leg, buckos. Trim the yards."

Matt found Captain Trelawn in a scupper. His leg was gashed from thigh to knee. He'd managed to pull a bandanna from a dead man's head. It was knotted above the wound, but it still bled fitfully.

Matt swore.

Trelawn grinned. "Didn't ye know there was a fight, Matt?"

Matt shouted the names of *Hawk* men.

"We'll get you aboard. Or, better perhaps here?"

Trelawn shook his head. "My own ship, lad. We have merchandise to guard. Another twist to this damned rag, an' we'll make shift."

Crewmen came. Some were wounded themselves. With sailoring experience they knew what to do—they rigged a bosun's chair.

Matt lifted Trelawn, who roundly damned him. Three men went over the side to receive the patient. Settled into the plank that made the chair, Trelawn grunted. "Lower away."

Matt carried Trelawn into the cabin. Mistress Lallie rose unsteadily from a bunk on which she'd been sulking. Her feet were lashed together. Her eyes were big on Trelawn. She stonily refused to look at Matt.

"Take her forward," Matt said. "We must rip his breeches leg."

The men guffawed at such delicacy. Rum was the universal remedy for a wound. Simon poured raw liquor into the gash. Trelawn grimaced, and bit off a jest. "Hold your hands to the overflow, buckos. It'll taste the better of it."

Bleeding staunched, Simon pressed an unclean cloth over the wound and bound it with another.

"Lay me on deck," Trelawn said. "Since Benjy who could navigate is gone, I'll still make shift. Cast off, lads. Ho for the rendezvous!"

WOMEN were jewelry at the division. They sat in a huddled bunch on the sands of Ambergris. Beyond them were piles of loot, in great stacks. There was no cheating in division. Men were already quaffing rum, which had been landed first. The *Royal James* was beached, and would be gutted and burned. Everything went proper share but jewelry, which was traded or diced for.

But much more exciting than jewelry, this. Men crowded round the barrel where a burly fellow rattled twigs in a pewter tankard. The penalty of those already drunk was that they couldn't stand to draw for their luck.

Mistress Wherry had a dirty face and a red bandage over her brows. There was no suggestion of the quality clothes that she'd worn before. A shirt and a sailor's baggy denim trousers were her costume. She was herself, fiercely defiant.

"Any man that wins me," she flared, "I promise I'll make opportunity to kill!"

The men cheered, clustered round the barrel. Matt shoved a way to it. He hauled the auctioneer down. The man turned furiously, then saw who it was.

He subsided, and Matt stepped up.

"For this one," he shouted, "I make an offer. *Hawk* captured her and she takes *Hawk's* fancy."

"And who the devil's he?" a tall mop-bearded man growled.

A neighbor spoke quickly in his ear. The beard wasn't impressed. "A right buxom piece. She'll come high."

Matt held a necklace overhead. "In the name of Cap'n Trelawn, sick aboard, I offer in advance this pearl rope to who may win the twig. Worth five hundred pieces in any merchant's in Royal."

Men crowded to look. "A fair offer, smith. The wench certainly takes your fancy, eh?"

"Not by a shot!" the mop beard called. "If I win, I won't sell such fire for a bauble o' jewelry."

A *Hawker* passed to Matt his own share of the drawing of plunder. "A cross o' fine gold!" Matt shouted. "Set with the seven stones o' fortune. Worth another four hundred."

A man snorted. "Little good a cross'll do any man here."

Mop-beard was silent. But Lucifer was looking at the girl with an interest that was more shrewd than sensual. Matt's blood ebbed. It could be this devil had once seen her, or knew what she was worth.

Lucifer said fairly, "The wench takes my fancy too. Rules say no man's bound to take any offer to sell what's his. If I win her I'll not sell."

"Very well." Matt dropped the jewelry into his pocket. "Rules are open to make another offer." He grinned at them all like a wolf himself. "I make offer to fight any man for who wins her! Who'll gamble his luck wi' me for his winnings?" Matt stared at them. "Blade or bare hands or teeth!" Matt showed his teeth. "Who takes me! I'll even throw in the cross for his good luck."

A sea lawyer objected. "Rules says no

man's bound to take up that offer neither."

"Sure enough—" Matt grinned— "no man is *bound.*"

Captain Lucifer squeaked up. "Enough good men have been lost. Since the wench is that valuable to him, I vote the winner to take the jewels. Bells o' hell, lads, there's more to come up yet."

Matt glanced over the mob once more and stepped down. The bosun heaved himself up with a hand on Matt's shoulder. "Godamercy, lad. Ye wouldn't be wanting to marry the wench, would ye?" He rattled his tankard of twigs. "Who draws? Up an' pick your chance, hearties. For a thousand pieces worth o' jewels."

Grimy hands, some still blood-stained, reached for the tankard. Men swore as they drew blanks. A gap-toothed monstrosity drew the notched one.

Lallie's shoulders shuddered and she sucked a sharp breath as she realized what might have been her fate. The man came good-humoredly to Matt for his price.

"A better bargain than a fight," he admitted frankly.

Matt took Lallie by her arm and dragged her away to search for Dickie Jenks.

"I'm taking her aboard. You keep the longboat. Load up *Hawk's* share. When the crew's done carousing, bring 'em along."

"'Strewth!" Dickie exclaimed. "Time was, cully, I thought Lucifer would bloody well fight ye for 'er. 'E knows summat."

With the girl in the first handy dinghy, Matt rowed in grim silence.

She had to say something. Slow fire was in her eyes. "I promised to kill anybody who won me."

Matt rowed on, expressionless.

"But, then," she said. "You didn't win me, exactly."

Matt rowed.

"You bought me."

He knew she meant, *What now?* He had no answer for that.

Lallie became more direct. "Am— am I worth that much to you?" Her tongue tipped damp red lips.

Matt glanced at her, felt a warmth creep through him, but he answered, "You're forgetting that dowry for your English lord in the valise."

She flared, her bosom thrusting at the torn cloth of her shirt. "So that's why! You're nothing but a damned pirate!"

"Better, perhaps, than a bonded prentice—your servant."

Lallie's eyes showed fear for the first time. He knew she thought he'd finally rebelled against his life and finally become a pirate. He watched his words take effect.

She said, "What are you going to do with me?"

"Captain Trelawn," Matt said, "is going to get a ransom for you—" he hesitated— "for as much as he thinks you're worth."

She stared, open-mouthed. "And I'd be sent back—safe?"

"Aye. Safe for another try to marry that lord."

She trembled and he laughed, resting his oars.

ABOARD the *Hawk* Matt told Trelawn, "Lucifer suspects something."

Trelawn, lying uselessly on a cabin bunk, wasn't surprised. "Ah. So the devil sees value to our merchandise. Best we slip away."

Matt went out and sat on an upturned bucket, worried, silent. It was not going to be easy to get out of his trap. If Lucifer's men got as drunk as the *Hawk's,* they might slip away. Yet, there were only himself and Lallie to man the ship.

Lucifer would hardly know about the little iron chest of the dowry. But if he were shrewd enough to guess that Lallie was worth something more than just a man's fancy, it could go bad.

Shouts and singing came from the beach. He saw dark silhouettes of men against fires, staggering with high-waved tankards. If Lucifer now had force enough of his character to keep just one or two of his men sober. . . .

A boat bumped softly against the midship section. His heart surged. Dickie Jenks! Good, faithful poacher.

Over the fo'csle hatch Matt saw strong brown hands fumble to tie a painter to the ship's ratline stays.

Into the white moonlight a red turban lifted above the rail's black shadow. Matt's breath caught sharply. This wasn't Dickie Jenks.

A broken nose and thin sardonic eyes moved up. The moon glittered on a white moorish knife held between grinning teeth.

Captain Lucifer's face hung there, enjoying the diabolic instant. Then a hand emerged, moonlight flashed on the wide arc of Lucifer's heavy cutlass. He threw a leg over the rail.

From a loop in that wide belt he grasped a pistol. "It hasn't rained this day," he reminded Matt, alluding to dry powder. He took the knife from his teeth, clicked it into its sheath in a lower loop. "You're alone. Your crew as drunk ashore as my own dogs. A wounded man and the wench aboard. With you overboard, I'll twist her tale out o' the wench in one minute o' handling."

Matt's hands strained at the capstan bars as though to break their stout oak. One came loose in his grasp and he flung it underhand. It caught Lucifer broadside across his chest. The pistol roared. Its ball went somewhere.

Matt closed with the other capstan bar. Lucifer swung his cutlass hugely, like hewing at a tree. Matt's momentum and uncertain footing carried him right into the arc. It would have cut him in half. His instinctive parry was with the oaken stave. The cutlass *thwacked* into it, bit nearly through, remained imbedded in the tough wood.

Matt grunted to the tingle of the blow in his wrist. He let go the bar, leaving its weight to hang on the cutlass. Then both his hands were on that wrist, savaging, twisting.

Lucifer clung desperately to the hilt. He kicked to knock that weight off his blade. Matt let go one hand, slipped it between Lucifer's hand and body, and wrenched the elbow against his own. Lucifer yelled. The cutlass dropped, and Matt felt the slash of the thing on his instep.

He snatched for the long knife in Lucifer's belt. Lucifer's hand was already there. The knife glittered. Matt smashed hand and knife against the ship's rail. Lucifer blasphemed again.

"Man to man!" Matt shouted. "Ye'd twist things out o' the girl, hey?"

"Man to devil!" Trelawn's voice came weakly from the cabin. "Hold un, lad. I'll make shift to hop yet."

Lucifer flung his great bulk off the rail. Matt's heel stubbed a rope. Both sprawled to the deck, Lucifer on top. They rolled, fighting. Ring bolts crunched one of Matt's ribs. Lucifer's thumbs gouged at his eyes. The man stank of sweat and brimstone, in keeping with his name.

Matt battered away. His foot found a deck cleat. He hooked a toe under it and was able to heave up his torso, weight and all in his arms.

Lucifer tore free and whirled away, his hand to the rail, wrenching at a belaying pin. Matt rushed him away from it. They both brought up with a jolt against a carronade. Matt battered the man against it; bent him back over it.

Lucifer's teeth were on his wrist, crunching as might a wolf. Matt forced him back. Back over the unyielding iron. Lucifer screeched thinly again. Matt could feel the crunch of vertebrae right through the great body's spasm. The devilish clawing hands fell away from his throat.

Matt shoved away from the thing. He whirled to be sure the girl hadn't witnessed this fight.

And there she stood.

WHITE in the moonlight, she stared, panting as heavily almost as he. Then she gasped and ran away aft. Breathless as he was, Matt couldn't restrain a tortured chuckle.

He heard Trelawn feebly from the cabin. "The cat tore loose o' me. Are ye safe, Matt, lad? Bells o' damnation. Will somebody speak?"

Matt stepped into the cabin, and at Trelawn's thankful words, fumbled for the whale oil lantern. Trelawn's bandage was loose, and Matt tended it.

"He told somebody probably," Matt said, referring to the dead Lucifer, still on deck. "Likely they'll be belling around, come soberness."

"And find the iron box."

"So, how's this plan," Matt said. "Gunner Dickie's ashore wi' the longboat. Sober. I'll go in Lucifer's dinghy, collect such crew as I can—could we get away?"

Trelawn was eager. "We'll make it, lad. Go get 'em—and pitch the devil overboard."

Matt shook his head. "He'd float ashore. Even if he told no one, who'd be blamed but we who ran?"

"Aye. Better we weight 'im with his great sword and sink 'im at sea. Go, lad."

Matt went ashore. Dickie and he managed to collect nine sodden sacks of drunken men into the longboat. "T'other's'll be Gawd knows where," Dickie said.

Back at the *Hawk*, Matt hoisted the few rum-soaked men over the rail.

"Let 'em lay in scuppers," Trelawn called from the cabin. "Get hooked to davits. Swing the boat aboard. Lash 'er Then bring me topside."

He was as anxious as Matt to get away from the trap. Soon, in the clear moonlight and with wind astern, it was easy to thread between the silent fleet. Never a hail came. Only the ghosts of old *matelotes* standing the graveyard watch were there to hear the warning of a night heron's croak from the canted yard of the old Spanish galleon.

When the beach fires were tiny red pin-pricks, Trelawn laughed. "Head her into wind. Up wi' main. You to the throat, Matt. The lass to the peak."

Inexpertly, but with almost winch power, Matt finally hauled the proper rope. "Belay!" the roar came. "Let the peak meet 'er. Lend the lass a hand, lunker. Up and make fast."

The big sail slapped in the wind.

Again, "Nor-norwest, Dickie. By the lee of Acklin, I know a hole where the devil himself'll never find us. An' speakin' of the devil—his hacker to his feet and sink this one."

They sank Lucifer, and Trelawn rounded up by memory in a fairy nook by the lee of Acklin near Dog Island, where pelicans flapped and dived with clumsiness that ought to have broken their necks. Where frigate birds wheeled and harried them till they disgorged their catch, then swooped to snatch it from the air before it touched water.

One of the crew, Simon, was yet drunk. "Marooning is what he and some needs," Trelawn said. He called Matt to consult about plans. Matt bore up. Everything depended on this.

Trelawn said, "With four good men I can make shift to run the *Hawk* to Royal and collect ransom before delivery. How say you I maroon ye here on Dog with the lass and five men?"

Matt glanced over pale green water to Dog Island. A half-moon of white beach was inviting. Beyond were coconuts, jack pines; water oaks and smooth red-splotched boles of gumbo indicated spring water.

"How long would you be gone?"

"A landlubber question. Brace o' weeks, a month, mayhap. Got to for the lass. I'll leave buccan meat. Fish an' turtle is plenty. There's pig or goat in the brakes."

"And a keg of powder," Dickie said happily.

"An' a keg," Simon belched, "o' summat to kill the fevers in spring water."

Matt looked at the girl. She defied them all. "I'll not cook for drunken pigs!"

They shouted laughter. "No, lass," Trelawn eyed her. "Sweet and pretty I guarantee return to Wherry. We'll not spoil merchandise." He glared round at the five selected. "Mind, now—I'll come back an' kill any one that spoils the bargain." He grinned. "Reckon supercargo'll watch that."

MATT scowled over the building of the little camp. A special hut was built for Lallie. As she was installed, she caught at Matt's arm.

"Matt—I—I'm afraid."

It was useless to make light of the situation. "Dickie'll be with us. He's a good man. That leaves but four of them."

"Four swords to yours wouldn't worry me. But four pistols!"

Days sped. A little rain, a little sun, a lot of fishing and hunting. A lot of loafing with enough of rum. But the rum-soaked hours were spent with too much looking hungrily at the little house and laughing to under-the-breath jokes.

Until one day Matt took his sword, scored a deep line across the sand from woods fringe to beach. "A reminder," he scowled at the men, "of what Trelawn said. We deliver no spoilt goods. No man crosses."

Big Simon heaved himself up. "Only you, hey? With excuse to take the wench her vittles?"

"Make it only little Dickie, if you will. But that's the mark."

"When were ye elected fleet admiral?" the gaunt man named Tewy growled. Simon took it up, then morosely returned to dipping his cup from the keg of rum.

Matt told Lallie, "Whatever you want,

come to the line and ask. I can't make favors. The rules are every free rover must be even. Ashore no man's king. But we can talk across the line."

"About what?"

"About some day. Whenever a chance may come at that powder keg."

She stared wide-eyed understanding, swallowed once before saying, "All right, Matt. If you can lure them all away—hunting or something." She reached to touch his arm, but he whirled and strode off to lowering glances from the watching men.

Dickie Jenks joined Matt by the water's edge and frowned into blue distance. "They be dicin'."

Matt was glum. "There's not much else to do. I wish almost for a hurricane to keep 'em busy."

Dickie shook his head. "Dicin', Matt, for chips o' wood numbered one an' two, three an' four—no more."

"Good God!"

"Yuss. They'll drink up to the dare of doing it, too. You know what it'll be."

Matt gripped Dickie's arm. "Look. Get 'em all away. Hunting. Tell 'em you got a swamp deer marked down."

Dickie looked toward the hut. "I could tyke three. Tewy's too blinkin' lush 'appy to 'ave interest in owt else but rum."

Matt held his breath, waiting, watching. Dickie managed to talk three off into the woods. Matt ambled over and slouched beside Tewy.

"Left ye alone, hey?"

Tewy belched. He passed his cup to Matt. "Sit. Dip me another, ol' friend."

Matt lifted the rum keg to his knees. He passed rum to Tewy, until the latter sank into stertorous oblivion. He had Lucifer's moorish knife, then, and he used it, working the point between the butt joints, till the rum leaked drop by drop.

He set the keg back on the sand, then returned to the beach, and dreamed of—somewhere—anywhere, but here.

The hunters returned. Dickie had a blackened eye and a cut lip.

"All to hunt was a devil-burning thirst. Where's a cup—why, slit an' fry the trullson!" Simon bellowed. "He's swilled a boat crew's share!"

He kicked Tewy's ribs. A vast wet belch erupted.

Reuben Dunn gave vindictive opinion. "A should right well slit un an' run it out. Let un have it to his week's ration."

In the night Matt heard Tewy and the men wrangling about his hoggery.

In the morning, Matt shaved with Lucifer's Moorish knife. And he wondered why? But perhaps he'd not keep these brutes company for long.

The wrangle over their liquor held for five good days. They fought no more, because as Simon said, "We can't afford to be losin' a man!" Then the rum was gone. They sobered sullenly.

And still no *Hawk*.

Morose, impatient, the four men talked. Neither Dickie nor Matt needed to be told how the land lay. The men's eyes turned furtively toward the smaller hut. They watched sullenly as Matt walked the line with Lallie down to the beach and sat by the peaceful water.

"MATT," she told him, "this time I'm really afraid."

"And I." Matt admitted. "We're neither of us pistoleers. But Dickie's with us, with his poacher's skill. We must contrive to get away in the boat, somehow. Three against four."

Lallie's mouth rounded like her eyes. "Where to?"

"Any other island. There's millions. Dickie says we could handle a sail." He wanted to tell her more, but he couldn't bring the words. Tongue-tied as well as hand-tied, he mused angrily.

He went on, "It's got to be done without noise. Even the drag of the boat over sand would bring 'em shooting. And they're not drunk now."

"Night!" She clutched his arm and his senses reeled. "It's at night I'm afraid, Matt. They'd take you in your sleep."

Matt laughed grimly. "We don't sleep. Turn at watch, Dickie an' I. No. Some chance must come."

"God give it."

His hand touched hers. "I'll make the chance!"

She pressed softly against him now. He pushed her warily off, fearing the men's glances. But that touch would linger.

"Your sword?" she said. "Aye, I believe you could. Matt, to one such as you opportunity will come."

A few days later when they were lounging morosely in the hut shade, Lallie suddenly pointed.

"A sea serpent! Look! There—a great head!"

Matt laughed. "No serpent. But the biggest turtle that ever swam!"

The men ran for the boat, and inspiration showed Matt his chance. A desperate one, certainly. But less so than staying on Dog with four men who had the virtues of goats.

He raced to the hut, snatched his sword, and had to wade waist deep into the long shallows to catch up with their eagerness.

A great beast it was. Six feet to its mossy carapace. Its flippers were sweeping like oars. The men rowed after it, yelling.

"Up on it, smith! It'll dive. Easy alongside, and hew its head off at a stroke!"

The turtle's head came high to look. The size of a keg, it was. Matt wasn't looking at it. He watched the shore to see whether the girl had divined his plan—remembered.

She had. He saw her rolling the powder keg down the beach, into the sea. He gave a great shout of laughter.

The boat slipped up on the turtle. He leaned over the gunwale. Water sloshed in. They cursed him for his clumsiness, but with a sure flick, he severed the turtle's neck. The great head sank.

The men yelled, applauded. They got a line around one threshing flipper, pulled for shore.

Matt waited till the boat was at waist depth. Then he leaned heavily on the gunwale again. The boat turned neatly over.

Matt caught Dickie's breeches, hauled him back. With the boat between them and the men, he said, "Get ashore fast. Get the valise—the right one. And back. I'll tend to these four now!"

Dickie, neck-deep, waded, splashed, ran. The four men intent upon their catch, damned him for not lending a hand, left the boat to Matt to bring in.

They shoved their beast ashore, like a waterlogged boat. Matt was throwing an almost continuous geyser of water out of the boat with the gourd bailer. When he could stand up in it, he called to Lallie, staring at his frenzied performance from the beach.

"To me, girl! Quick!"

Dickie was taking a heart-stopping time to get out of the hut with the valise. Lallie came splashing to the boat. One of the pirates looked up. He dug his elbow into another's side. They understood nothing as yet.

One of them shouted a question.

Matt helped the girl into the boat. He put the gourd into her hands, "Bail!" he told her. "I'll be having trouble yet."

He stepped out of the boat into water up to his waist, holding his sword under water. Dickie came staggering down the long stretch of sand.

Simon got it first. "A devil! It's a getaway. Him and the wench." He raced for the hut, two others after him.

Reuben Dunn, more stupid, still gawped. Then he, too, ran.

Dickie was splashing into the sea, the weight of the valise dragging between his legs. Simon came back, rushing at Matt. He waded out, cutlass high, throwing a wave before his waist. He swung the same old furious pirate stroke high at Matt's head.

Matt parried. The cutlass blade came close to his ear before it was stopped. In the water, he couldn't lunge. But he flicked his arm out inside Simon's blade. His cut slit along Simon's thick red neck, through sinew, jugular, muscle to vertebrae.

Simon's arms cramped, half-bent, like a pelican's twisting dive. More clumsily than a pelican, he flopped into the water.

Matt heard Lallie scream in the boat behind him. He angled to help Dickie with the valise. It still dragged the little man down.

Tewy and the others guessed what the valise was. They howled bloody vengeance, splashed to cut him off.

Matt reached him first. "Keep going, Dickie," he ordered tightly. "Sink the treasure if ye must, but make the boat."

Both men hewed at Matt, from opposite sides. Matt knew the attack. He dropped to one knee. His point slipped into Tewy's stomach. Before water spouted red his upstroke in the *octave* slashed the other man's arm. Not deadly, this, but the blade dropped from nerve-shocked fingers.

The man backed away. His eyes were stricken with acceptance of death. Matt's point was at his chest to spit him. Dunn stood still, waiting.

Matt dropped his point. "Back to shore —and you may live to tell the skipper how it happened."

The man backed uncertainly to the shore. Matt waded to the boat. He heaved himself up on his hands and rolled in. There his first move was to tuck his sword securely under a thwart.

He shut his eyes for a long minute, washing the island and its brutishness from his mind. Then with a great outblown breath, "Bail 'er and sail 'er. Dickie, do you know aught of this sliding gunter thing the skipper said was so handy for bringing folks home in a long boat? And where the Bahamas are?"

Dickie knew the gunter rig and said, "This is all of it—Bahamas. A million blinkin' islands. Most of 'em with water and meat. Yer cruises till yo're bloomin' well picked up."

Lallie couldn't wash the scene so easily from her mind. She crouched, her face hidden in her hands, her yellow hair a sodden mat. At intervals her body shrank in tight shudders.

THEY were picked up. Crossing the Verde-Crooked passage, a fat Dutch Maatschappij three-master lumbered up from behind Rum Cay. Dickie headed to meet her, contrived with heartstopping inexpertness to run alongside. Red faces looked down. A rope snaked over to them.

Matt hauled himself up hand over hand. He called to Dickie, "Pass a sling around 'er an' I'll hoist."

Dickie made haste to rope the valise.

"The girl first, monkey!" Matt roared. He lifted Lallie in great heaves. He dropped the sling, let it lie, blew a huge breath from his lungs.

A smooth-faced young mate took them to the captain, plump and Dutchly complacent.

"We escaped!" Lallie said quickly before he could ask a question. "Taken by pirates and escaped!"

"So?" The captain nodded, surprised at no happening of the sea. "Lucky. A jung gaarl. Undt naice. *Verry* lucky. For dose devil pirates, I must carry twenty cannons. You vill pe tired now, yes? Undt hungkry, no? We talk later, ja."

Not long later Matt talked with Dickie. Dickie ran toward him in a froth of excitement. "D'yer knew where this ship's goin'? Blymie! She's for colonies, chum. For Boston!"

Matt's reaction was morose acceptance. After all that mad fury of action in pirate lairs, he would return to cramped conditions that had been his before he'd been snatched out of them and made a free man. He grinned crookedly at the bloody price a man had to pay for freedom.

Lallie found him later, still leaning morosely over the rail, alone. She was dressed in an embroidered jacket, too tight for her swelling figure, rendered modest by a shawl, and a skirt that bulged over more than one petticoat whose lacy fringes showed. It was not a Paris fashion. It was last word in Amsterdam.

She said, "Dickie tells me you're all in the dumps about Boston."

"Why not?" Matt said bitterly. "In Boston I'll still be your father's bonded prentice with nearly five years to run."

She looked at him provocatively, as she had once before. "You could be bought out. There's a little something in my iron box—that the English Lord won't get. That nobody would ever get if you hadn't saved it."

Matt said, "*Your* box?"

"Ah! Stubborn you!" she flared out and stormed at him.

Matt remained morose and suppressed by the inescapable conditions of civilization—and heartsick. In his sword-slashed shirt and shapeless raggy blue half-way-to-

(Continued on page 111)

WALK WITH DEATH

The sword cane came into being as the habit of sword bearing passed out. The habit of bearing arms fostered through many generations was not easily cast aside, however.

Sword canes are, generally, of one type and differ only in details as to blade sections; straight or crooked grip; operations of release and method of concealing the point of contact of the grip and blade sheath.

—From the files of Ask Adventure

An Incident of Massacre

He was giving them another lesson—
he was teaching them to die. . . .

THE regimental band struck up *"The Girl I Left Behind Me . . ."* and the regiment wheeled in column of fours in full bandoleers and field equipment and rode out of the Fort McDowell gate, south toward the Gila River. The sabers clinked in counterpoint, and carbine boots slapped against good horseflesh.

It was breaking dawn and Ballien wished he had a cigar. He watched Colonel Sabine take off his hat and bow from the saddle to the assembled wives of the officers and men as he rode by, and the band played another repeat bar.

It was all very fine. Music and brass horns shining in the early morning sunlight and gallant officers. A full regiment in blue and flags catching the wind, the dust rolling off to the left, and white canvas-walled supply wagons following slowly.

By PAUL ARTHUR LUNDGREN

But bands didn't kill Apaches, nor did the brown-skinned devils with new carbines appreciate the subtle compliment of a fight to the musical accompaniment of *Garryowen*. And old Al Teiber knew they didn't.

Teiber rode next to Ballien and they were the only two dressed in civilian garb. In stature and manner they were strangely similar, and their only difference besides age was that Teiber's face was scorched and brown from the desert sun, and Ballien looked pale beside him.

Teiber had been headquarters chief of scouts for three regimental commanders, Hadly, Galspaath, and now Sabine. But of the three, Sabine was definitely the most military. And from Teiber's experience the most military meant the most casualties, as he had conceded to Ballien the night before.

Hadly was back in Washington on Sheridan's Potomac army, and Galspaath was distributed over a three mile stretch of the military trail between Fort Yuma and Camp Prescott, where he'd been taken alive by some raiding White Mountain Apaches.

First, they broke Galspaath's ankles. Then they tied him between two horses. . . . At any rate Galspaath was a tough old fool, so he lasted three miles.

Vengeance, Washington was screaming. So Colonel Sabine was handed a saber in the war department and ordered to take it West. Partly because Galspaath was a close personal friend of Sabine, and partly because the war department had no openings for major generals.

Even the correspondent for the *New York Times* was a little chagrined at the type of army officer sent to the department of Arizona to placate the Apache nation.

The correspondent's name was Ballien, Jacob Ballien. He was old to Indian wars and army ways, having been with General Terry in the Sioux campaigns when Custer and the Seventh were shot up. Besides this, he'd served a term as an orderly to Grant during the civil war. He was invaluable to Grant, because of his newspaper experience and also his dexterity with hot towels.

Captain Meade, who had once been with the Seventh Cavalry before being shuffled out, glowered at the huge, bulging back of Colonel Sabine and spat a gob of tobacco juice down off to the side.

They rode across the Salt and Verde Rivers below the junction and out into the rolling desert, and Teiber got his first reports from his scouts up ahead. He rode up to Colonel Sabine and addressed him.

"All the way to the Gila there are clear signs that the Apache are watching us, sir."

The colonel took his hat off and wiped his cuff against his forehead.

"Is that all you've got to tell me?" Then he added sarcastically, "Do you think I give a continental whether they watch me or not? We are here to teach the Apache a lesson, sir. Not to sit in our saddles and worry whether they are watching us move out in column of fours and sixes."

Lieutenant Parker, the colonel's aide, snickered at this.

Teiber ignored him. "No, sir. But you ain't even going to see an Apache unless you deploy your men, sir."

"Look, Teiber, you may be the civilian equivalent of a major in the army, sir. But in this regiment you are in the position of advisor. You are not in command," the colonel said.

"No, sir. That is obvious, sir," Teiber retorted.

The colonel reddened. "Now, about that point in tactics. If we deploy, we weaken. You should read De Brack, Mr. Teiber. He is a man who can teach you cavalry tactics. History shows that cavalry tactics have been learned the hard way, sir. I'll not explain this again."

He looked at Teiber as if he expected him to comment.

"I realize my knowledge is not strong on cavalry tactics. But I do know Apaches. And they won't fight your way, Colonel," Teiber said flatly.

Colonel Seiber's eyes sparkled in amusement. "Any suggestions you have, you will address to Lieutenant Parker. He is a man only recently from West Point and will be able to understand thoroughly your tactical knowledge, sir." He smiled thinly and looked away.

TEIBER stiffened in the saddle. He stared at Colonel Sabine as if he didn't believe what he had just heard. He cut out of column and rode back to his detachment of scouts. He changed horses and rode up alongside Ballien, the correspondent.

"Come on, if you want something to write about," he yelled and spurred toward the hills rising up in a long string, like little loaves of bread, in the distance. Ballien followed.

After he had moved out some distance, he looked over his shoulder. The regiment looked small and out of place in its orderly march across the rolling sand and rock. Soon it was out of sight entirely. Ballien followed closely behind Teiber, and thought about the kind of man who would continue as chief of scouts for an officer he couldn't respect.

Ballien could hardly call it loyalty. No, it was something else, he decided. Maybe it was hate. They rode another hour and the horses were spewing chunks of white saliva to the side.

"This is good enough," Teiber said.

He dismounted and led his mount down to the bottom of the gulch where there was a small waterhole. It was surrounded by large slabs of rock that reminded him of a wall.

"How far are we from the main column?" Ballien asked.

"Only about four miles," Teiber said as he sat down cross-legged on the sun-baked clay at the edge of the water. He grunted and said, "A man from Missouri—a man that's got to be shown."

"Where are your scouts?"

Teiber looked up sharply. "Here," he said, drawing a line in the mud and placing dots around it, forward, both flanks, and behind. "You never fought Apache?" he asked Ballien.

"Apache," Teiber said half-closing one eye. "He fights like—" He struggled to find the words. "He fights like the whole damned desert!"

Ballien took his last cigar out of his pocket and cut it in two. He gave half to Teiber and they lit up. Then he got the story.

Out here, it became very real. It was as everybody expected. Chato had crossed the line back into the United States from the Mexican side and was trying to raise a larger force. He had rifles and Apache women as an enticement. And Teiber had said that the Apache were making a lot of talk, or they would have done something before now.

It was a strange feeling for Ballien to know that the Apache chiefs never were in doubt as to the purpose and position of Sabine's entire regiment. The mountains took on a stark and crowding look about them. He laughed at himself.

Teiber got to his feet. He climbed up to the top of the rock wall and surveyed the surrounding country. Then he came down and they untethered their horses and rode back toward the regiment.

Ballien thought Teiber looked calmer and more collected. Perhaps the embarrassment of being criticized by Sabine in front of the men had hurt more than Teiber had revealed.

They made contact with the regiment at about time for noon mess. Sabine had chosen a sloping hill in the center of a table flat country for bivouac. Teiber didn't speak until they got only a few hundred yards away from camp.

"Sabine doesn't have a chance pitting a regiment of cavalry against Chato's gang. He can't fight Apache without fighting the way they want to fight."

Ballien sensed that Teiber was making a crude attempt to win him to his side.

"Where do you think they'll strike?" Ballien asked.

Teiber shrugged. "I got a hunch it'll be around Rock Wells."

Sabine's tent was put up in the center of the encampment. They went to Teiber's scout detachment and picketed the horses. Then Ballien and Teiber went to Sabine's tent together.

The colonel looked up from his steaming cup of tea he was holding as they entered. He had taken his hat off and unbuttoned his tunic at the front.

"Teiber, good to see you got back."

He nodded at Ballien. He rose and went to the little oil burner on top of an empty cartridge box.

"Tea, gentlemen?" He went ahead and poured two cups. "It is a habit I acquired as military attache to the British while stationed in London," he said as he handed it to them.

"Chato has a conference of some of his people going on in the mountains. It must be important or they would have started down by now," Teiber said blowing his breath over the tea.

The colonel put the tips of his delicate fingers together and laughed. "No, gentle-

men, we don't fight battles against Indians. We fight skirmishes, yes. But not battles." He sat down and stirred his tea carefully with a little silver spoon. "Could Chato be persuaded by anything less than bullets to take his people back to the reservation?" he asked.

Ballien noticed Captain Yancey and Captain Meade look up at Sabine with surprise.

"No sir. I mean it would take more promises than we can give, sir." Teiber spoke fast and assuredly.

"How?" Sabine asked.

"First, it would take the removal of that white renegade Thompkin, from the San Carlos reservation. The keeping of promises that Colonel Hadly made in his treaty, and the protection of the army against white settlers who abuse them," Teiber said.

"I have no more use for Thompkin than you, Mr. Teiber. But as you know he is under the Indian bureau, and we have no authority to kick him out." Sabine's eyes began to show anger.

"Yes, sir—" Teiber interrupted.

"And," the colonel continued, "Hadly had no authority from Washington to make any treaty or agreement with Chato. He should face court martial for that." The colonel drew his saber and rose to his feet.

"You, Teiber," he said, pointing with the blade. "And many others of this command fail to realize it is not we who are in error, it is Chato." He stomped back and forth resenting the restriction of the tent. "If Chato can torture and murder a commanding representative of the U. S. Army, he can think he can get away with anything," he shouted. "He can't! By Moses, he can't!"

The men in the tent moved uncomfortably at the colonel's harshness. Only Teiber retained his usual calm.

"Galspaath, sir, was a military fool, or he wouldn't have been captured in the first place. In the second place he was scared. He had one regiment of cavalry, fifty per cent under strength, and a skeleton regiment of practically useless infantry for ten thousand Apache. How many miles to patrol, God only knows."

Sabine let his saber drop to the sand. His eyes were moist.

"Galspaath, for your information, was one of the finest officers the U. S. Army ever produced. He won the Congressional medal in the War Between the States. But I'll not tell you of his bravery in battle, sir. I can see it would make no impression," Sabine said and walked over to where Teiber sat.

"NOW tell me where this command can make contact with the enemy." He added, "As chief of scouts that is your duty, is it not?"

Ballien knew then that Teiber had lost the argument, and that Colonel Sabine wanted a fight worse than any man he had ever seen. He watched Teiber put the tea cup on the map table and lean forward.

"You'll find Chato's wickiups about three miles west of Rock Wells, up an arroyo that can be seen from the wells."

"Have your scouts report directly to me when they come in, sir," the colonel said and studied the map in front of him.

Teiber looked older when they got outside the tent. He walked back through the curious and staring men to his scout group and sat down. Ballien took a place beside him.

If the colonel tried to penetrate the canyon it would be a massacre. Everyone knew it now. The scouts, high-strung men by training, suspected trouble from watching Teiber. And the regiment's morale was lowered from watching the scouts.

And since the scouts came into camp and reported directly to Sabine, they assumed that Teiber and Colonel Sabine were at odds.

They didn't believe Sabine would start riding again until the next day. But the trumpeter sounded *Boots and Saddles* and they were again astride their heated horses.

The regiment rode through the hottest part of the afternoon and made the Gila River, which was bone dry this time of the year, and kept pushing south toward the Wells.

Ballien rode at Teiber's side. After they crossed the Gila, Teiber motioned to Ballien to follow and they cut out of column. They rode to the low range that Ballien remembered from that morning.

They met one of Teiber's white scouts, a man named Coleman, and the three rode on ahead together. After they got up to the plateau and the small hills that surrounded

the wells, Teiber picked out the hill that afforded the best observation and they rode toward it.

They tethered their mounts in a deep ravine and made their way to the top. The hills around the wells were low, and even though the slope they were on was farther away, it was the best lookout point for several miles.

Rock Wells was only a mud clogged water hole that sank about two feet down to a soggy pool. There were a few inches of bad-tasting water in the sink. It was tolerable to drink, and horses which had become accustomed to its taste could lap it dry in a few hours.

The country around the wells was flat. Two miles in every direction, except through the pass the regiment would soon ride through, was surrounded by low foothills.

Ballien noticed Teiber tense suddenly as he scrutinized the hills around the water hole. A puff of white smoke rose slowly from the knoll nearest the pass. Coleman saw it too.

"Ride back to Sabine and tell him he's heading into a trap," Teiber said to Coleman. Then he turned to Ballien. "You can stay with the supply wagons, or go back to Fort McDowell with the courier escort. Which will it be?"

Ballien rolled over on his side and took his field glasses out of their stained leather case.

"How about staying here?" he said.

"I'll not be responsible," Teiber replied harshly.

Ballien took out his notebook and put it down on the ground beside him. He looked at Coleman. "Coleman, did you hear that?"

Coleman nodded. "You ain't got as much chance staying alive here as you'd have if you was riding with Sabine."

"Leave your rifle and shells for Ballien," Teiber said in answer to Coleman's remark.

"That's it then," Coleman said and started making his way down to where they had picketed the horses.

The sun turned the flat lands around the wells into a yellow sea of rising heat waves. Ballien and Teiber made themselves as comfortable as possible on the crest of the hill, keeping low and out of sight.

Ballien trained the glasses on the regiment as it neared the pass. He watched Coleman report to Colonel Sabine at the head of the column. Coleman and two soldiers left the column after changing mounts and headed north, toward Fort McDowell with Sabine's battle reports.

He handed the glasses to Teiber. Teiber trained them on the hill where the white puff of smoke had risen a moment before. There was nothing in sight now.

The eight supply wagons circled hurriedly and prepared for battle. Then Teiber realized what Colonel Sabine was going to do.

"You fool—go back! Go back!" he muttered.

BEHIND the pass Ballien saw the Apache mounted and waiting for Sabine to come through the entrance. It was plain that the Apache would wait until the regiment got into the plateau and then swoop down on them, splitting them off from the supply wagons. And cut them to pieces in a running dash for the wells.

Chato had sent a party of around fifty men into the pass to bait Sabine away from the wagons. Sabine saw them, now.

Sabine sent his four understrength troops back to the wagons, where they dismounted. He was going to charge in a column of eight men abreast. They wheeled in columns into the line, moving easily and with practiced precision.

Ballien looked over at Teiber. His eyes were glassy and the muscles of his thick neck were white against his brown skin.

B, D and H troops fell into line, and the dust rolled slowly back to the supply wagons from the trampling horses. Sabine half turned in the saddle and gazed along the line with obvious pleasure.

Sabine's trumpeter was at his side. Ballien could almost see his lips move to give the command. He raised his saber high and the troop commanders followed down the line.

They started slowly and evenly. The regimental flags and guidons flapped loosely in the breeze, then tautened as the column picked up momentum.

Sabine at the head lowered his saber forward and the stinging notes of the bugle wafted across to where Ballien and Seiber lay.

They were riding at the fifty Apache as

fast as their horses could leap forward. The Apache waited. They waited until the gap between themselves and the charging troopers was about five hundred yards, then they wheeled and rode break-neck toward the wells.

The regiment rode through the pass and turned off, following the Apache toward the wells. Ballien trained his glasses on the wells. He nudged Teiber, and Teiber put them to his eyes.

"No!" he moaned. Lying in wait for the charging men of the regiment was another Apache band armed with carbines. They were hidden from view by the brush, but they were waiting for the fifty Apache horsemen to ride through them, and would then shoot down the troopers like sitting ducks.

The regiment would be chopped to pieces by Chato's mounted men, while their sharpshooters ravaged them in a deadly cross-fire.

Chato's mounted men rushed out from the shadows of the low hills where they had been patiently waiting. The warning of the counter-attack was shouted up to Colonel Sabine.

The regiment was nearing the wells. The hidden Apache opened fire in a volley. The white smoke of the guns and the dust of the horses hoofs splotched the plateau. The effect of the Apache fire was devastating. Horses plunged and men fell limply from their saddles to the sand. Colonel Sabine had his saber raised high, commanding the men to dismount. He had decided to take the wells in spite of the cost. His saddle revolver was in his left hand.

He charged into the wells. His men were dismounting and taking cover. They rushed the Apache around the depression and forced them back.

Ballien handed the glasses to Teiber. He watched the remaining troopers shoot their mounts for barricades, and form in a pocket around Sabine, who stood in the center firing his revolver. The regimental flag stuck in the mud at his side.

Horses with empty saddles milled in a pack around the water hole. There were about a hundred troopers still firing. They collected in the depression to await Chato's mounted attack.

Teiber scrambled to his feet and handed the glasses back to Ballien. "Come on!" he yelled. "We've got to get that supply train out of here."

Chato would need rifles and ammunition. And now he had the force split, it would be easy. He could take his time with the supply train as long as he kept Sabine out of the fight.

Ballien followed Teiber down to the horses. They mounted and rode pell-mell toward the supply wagons three miles away.

Sabine must have realized that if he could hold the wells he would have a chance. He had fallen into an ambush, but he also knew the folly of trying to fight a running battle with Chato's fresh horses.

Ballien and Teiber rode into the circle of wagons and up to Captain Yancey. The rattle of firing could still be heard across the hills.

"Hitch up the mules. Do it fast!" Teiber shouted.

Yancey looked at Teiber as if he meant to ask who he thought he was to give an order like that.

"You heard me!" Teiber roared at him and Yancey began directing his men.

Quickly the wagons rumbled into line, and Ballien and Teiber mounted fresh horses. Teiber rode up the line. "Roll 'em!"

The wagons creaked and whips snapped into action.

"Roll 'em all the way to Fort McDowell, Yancey. I'm taking B and H troops and go back and get Sabine," Teiber said. "Give all full bandoleers to B and H troops."

Teiber's horse reared in the excitement, and gray-haired Doctor Cooley, the regimental surgeon, rode up to him. "You'll need me, then," he said calmly.

Teiber nodded. "And bring every available man back with you from McDowell," he yelled after Yancey. Yancey waved in reply and spurred forward.

Teiber assembled his men and rode out toward the high hill that Ballien and he had watched the battle from.

As the line crossed over the crest of the hill Teiber held his arm high. His eyes quickly counted over the men still alive at the wells. "Dismount!" he ordered. "Dismount and take cover."

HE HAD been too late. The Apache were reforming for another charge at the wells. Sabine's eight troops were reduced to fifty men. It had been a slaughter.

Ballien dug in and cocked his rifle, throwing the bandoleer over his arm. The men grabbed off saddles for protection. Teiber watched the Apache begin their rush.

Ballien raised the glasses to his eyes. Sabine could see them now. He went over and talked to Captain Meade and Lieutenant Parker. They were holding a conference and Ballien noticed Sabine suddenly cock his pistol.

It looked like Sabine was dividing his men. Meade and Parker were withdrawing with the wounded toward the hill. They were retreating to join forces with Teiber. All but Sabine.

The mounted Apache charged at the wells from the far side in a plunging mass, but Sabine still remained at the wells.

He stood alone. His men were running and stumbling to make the hill, and most of them had when Meade ordered them to take cover. But Sabine remained standing in the sink, only the dead for a command. Dead horses and troopers sprawled together in a grotesque assembly of Apache carnage.

Ballien couldn't take his eyes off Sabine. He watched him raise his revolvers, one in each hand and begin firing, slowly and deliberately. It was as if he had all the time in the world, and actually believed that he could stop three hundred mounted Apache.

Teiber was shouting orders in the background, "Don't fire until I give the command. Then burn the barrels off them—if you want a drink of cold water again."

Sabine fired one round after another, calmly and confidently. Then Ballien saw what he was doing. He, Sabine, the great tactician was giving another lesson. He was teaching them how to die. It was his way of admitting finally that he had been wrong.

The gap between the Apache and Sabine closed and they swarmed over him. The last glimpse Ballien had of him was his falling to one knee, then the dust from the lead horses blanketed the action.

The entire Apache charge reined their horses at the wells, some dismounting and darting among the bodies in search of loot. The dust hung in a soft haze around the depression.

"Hold your fire!" Teiber shouted. "Hold! I'll shoot the first man that fires without orders." Teiber was running back and forth in front of the line.

Then one Apache galloped forward from the cloud of dust. He was carrying something shiny in his hand. Ballien's stomach became suddenly cold. It was Sabine's saber. The lone rider waved it tauntingly at the men on the hill. And the sound of his high-pitched laughter echoed up to them.

After the laughter, just as abruptly, he wheeled and turned away from the hill, and toward the canyon across the plateau. The whole Apache horde followed in thunderous roar of horses.

Ballien jumped to his feet. "Look! They're running! They're running!" Teiber's eyes were wide in amazement.

The Apache had won the battle but were retreating. It was happening before their very eyes. Ballien laughed and shouted, handing his glasses to Teiber. A shout went down the line, and Doctor Cooley and his two hospital orderlies trotted down the slope to Meade's men.

Teiber kept the men in line until he was sure the Apache had ridden off for good. Then Teiber and Ballien mounted and rode down to the wells with Doctor Cooley and a ten-man detail. They held their guns cocked and ready.

The sun was low on the horizon, and it bathed the mountains and the plateau in an orange, red light. Ballien had never seen anything to compare with it. And added to what they had to look at, it made him ill.

He turned his head away. It was strange, though. None of the bodies were mutilated in any way. The Apache personality and its many forms could never be anticipated. But even old Teiber thought it odd.

They went on to the spot where Sabine had fallen. The regimental flag was gone and all of the guns. Sabine's saber was the prize of Chato, but they had left the body of Colonel Sabine without a mark.

But over his head the Apaches had placed a square of white cloth with four white and round pebbles at the four corners. Teiber stooped down to it but didn't touch it. He shook his head.

It was a rarely given Apache salute to a dead enemy. Teiber said he had seen it only once before. Ballien watched the mingled emotions reveal themselves on Teiber's face.

There was something pathetic and yet terrible about what he was doing. He was repeating it over and over, "You fool! You —fool."

Ballien, hard as he might try, could never have imagined Teiber—gruff, strong, wise—he could never have imagined Teiber weeping. Yet, he was.

"You crazy fool! You crazy fool! You . . . crazy fool!" Cooley took him by the arm and led him back to the hill. The men looked at each other in surprise. They covered Sabine's body and went back themselves.

The men entrenched themselves on the hill for the night, and kept patrols down on the desert around the well. Teiber sat brooding into the fire with Meade, Parker and Ballien. Coleman, Yancey and the men from Fort McDowell would be on forced march by now, and probably arrive a little after dawn. And Apaches didn't fight at night.

Teiber didn't think the Apaches would come back. Chato was probably on his way into Sonora with his people by now. He had won the fight and proven his strength, and now was the time to retreat and consolidate his leadership.

They were all thinking about the massacre. Ballien lifted the tin cup filled with hot soup to his lips and watched the faces of Meade and Teiber over the rim.

Suddenly, Lieutenant Parker, who was the youngest and had been Sabine's aide, spoke up. "Why did he do it? Why did he force us at gun point to desert the wells and stay there to die himself?"

He was young and impulsive and the sight of Sabine's misplaced heroism must have affected him deeply in its finality.

Ballien watched old Al Teiber look up at the young officer sharply. His mouth moved as if he was going to speak, but he didn't.

The stars glistened in the bowl of sky, and the moonlight flooding the desert softened as a cloud passed over. Only an occasional coyote howl broke the silence. The patrols in the desert would keep them away, and the funeral detail would have work in the morning.

It was Ballien who spoke up first.

"Maybe Sabine knew after the first engagement that he was no match for Chato. Maybe he knew he was inadequate."

It didn't seem a very intelligent answer to Ballien after he had said it. He looked quickly in Parker's direction, ready to soften the insinuation, but no words escaped him.

Teiber was standing rigid, his face a mask, waiting. Waiting for what, Ballien didn't know at first. Then he did know. He was waiting for Parker's answer. Teiber was hoping and waiting for Parker to say that even he realized the truth about Sabine. That Sabine was no hero to Parker.

Inanely, Ballien said it again. "Maybe Sabine knew he was inadequate."

Then, after a long while, Parker said softly "Yes—maybe he knew."

And Teiber relaxed. He smiled crookedly and walked across the front of the group. Ballien saw him lay his hand on Parker's shoulder. Then Teiber walked out of the circle of light.

QUEEN OF SILK

Chinese history is tightly bound by silk. It was this rare cloth that first attracted the attention of Persia and Europe to the great unknown country to the east. It was impossible for them to make the silk cloth in the west and yet, we find references to silk several centuries B. C., which clearly points to the fact that there were trade relations between China and the outside world at that time.

As far back as Chinese history goes—over four thousand years—silk is mentioned. It is legendary that silk was first made by a queen who sought to prove her industry and patience by unravelling a silk-worm cocoon and then weaving the delicate threads into a piece of cloth. This proved such a remarkable material that larger cloths were made and tested for wear and other useful properties. Gradually the raising of silk-worms and the weaving of the cloth became one of the leading industries of China. It was used for making clothes, tapestries, banners and hangings.

—From the files of Ask Adventure

ASK ADVENTURE

Information You Can't Get Elsewhere

BUILDING a stock car.

I am building a stock car, using 37 or 38 Chev. coupe. I would like to fit a 3-ton Chev. or G.M.C. truck motor in the car. Would this be possible without too much trouble? We are allowed to "soup" our motors, so long as it is hidden; by this I mean that dual carbs, speed heads or dual intakes are banned. Anything that can be hidden such as cams, planed down heads, light flywheels are allowed. Have you any pointers as to souping an engine up to this extent? All our tracks are ¼ or ½ mile tracks. Quarter mile tracks are all done in second gear.

I would greatly appreciate any of your ideas or pointers on building a stock car and engine. How would an engine stand up that is partially souped being driven in second gear?

Charlie Weikman,
Dunnville, Ontario.

Reply by Walt Woestman: Souping stocks isn't exactly in my line but as there is no other Adventure man to handle it, I'll do my best.

I have, in one of my cars, a Wayne engine, which as you probably know is built up from Chevrolet parts, except for the head. The regular passenger car blocks and the hi-torque (truck) blocks are interchangeable so you should have no trouble on that score. Wayne uses GMC rods as they are somewhat stronger, and you might consider that angle. As you are not permitted to use dual manifolds you won't be able to use the Wayne head.

I do not approve of overboring a block, or stroking the shaft. This work is expensive and weakens the part of any engine, although it is done in many cases. The upkeep is rather high as you can see.

You will probably find that having the cam ground and raising the compression will be of the most help to you. You should be able to plane the head 0.100 to 0.150 provided that you use the regular flat-top pistons. The 0.150 will give you about 8-1 compression ratio. Heads may also be filled but that is strictly for the work of an expert. As you do not say what fuel you are allowed to use I can't give you much information on how high to go on the ratio. 8-1 is about as high as you can run with premium gasoline. By adding 25% Benzole you might get by on a 10-1 ratio. Anything above that will call for Methanol. On my 14-1 Wayne engine I use straight Methanol with good results. But remember that in using this fuel the lines must be larger and jets

and passages drilled out. The exact size can only be determined by local conditions.

Cam grinding is not too expensive and you will have to get a grinding expert to tell you which is the correct grind for your track. The use of special high-lift rocker arms will give good results, and the cost is only $12 for a set of intake rockers. These increase the lift by .060 but of course do not change the degree or dwell of the stock cam. I have never tried these rockers (Ray Brown, 5656 Santa Monica, Blvd. Hollywood 38) but I presume that you want to keep the cost down.

I see no reason why a Chevrolet should not stand up in second gear as do the Fords, which run on the local ¼-mile tracks, but naturally you must expect to replace transmission gears rather often. Frank McGurk, 697 S. La Brea, Inglewood, Calif. specializes in Chev. and GMC hop-up parts and his lists cost 25c, but I believe that if you mention my name he will give you a personal reply to your problems. (Frank used to drive for me).

California Bill, 6195 N. Figueroa St., Los Angeles 42, publishes a *Chevy Speed Manual* which sells for $2.00 and while I do not have a copy, I am sure that it will answer all of your problems, as the author is an instructor in the California schools. I have his *Hot Rod Manual* but it does not have much to say on Chevrolet engines.

FOR a fortune in South America.

After I am separated from service I hope to try to make my fortune in South America. I am interested in prospecting. Therefore any information on which country would offer the greatest opportunity in prospecting would be greatly appreciated.

Also I would like to know about the stability of the governments and if I would have to buck much red tape when entering any country such as Bolivia and Peru.

Cpl. Robert T. Kuglin,
San Francisco, Cal.

Reply by Victor Shaw: Colombia has been constantly producing gold since the Conquest and still is the top producer in South America, averaging something like a million dollars a month at the present time. Some prospectors claim that Colombia still offers the best opportunities if good prospects are located near some known placer or dredging operation. These are mainly on the upper Magdalena and Cauca rivers. The San Juan on the Pacific side is rich but is reported to be almost entirely held under option by American and other foreign interests.

There is placer country across the Andes from Quito on the upper Napo and Cururay, and there is also gold on the upper Yucayali and Mamore in the eastern section of Peru and Bolivia.

Also, in Chile, down in the islands and along the inlets all the way to Cape Horn, gold has always been found on the beaches after sea-storms; which leads us to conclude that there is some rich reef under the sea not very far away. North of the Straits on the Argentine side near the coast at least one rich placer deposit has been worked after being discovered by shipwrecked sailors years ago; and some other deposits were worked west of there not far north of the Straits near a place called Gallegos, many claims were filed on back at the turn of the century.

Incidentally, the so-called "Cape Horn Gold-rush" was in full swing when the Klondike strike was made; and many of these prospectors who had been using catboats, migrated to Dawson City and began using dogs or traveling on foot.

From personal observation I know that the gold in the sands of river bars along the upper Napo and Cururay is just dust with only occasional small nuggets being saved; and this leads one to conclude that it is freed from low-bearing rock ledges somewhere up in the eastern Andes. I don't know if there are dredges now working on these two rivers but they would certainly pay, although it would be a long haul to bring them in via the mouth of the Amazon. Years ago an English syndicate shipped a dredge around to Bolivia by steamer where it was disassembled and carried by mules and on human backs across to the tributary of the Mamore they imagined was the correct one; but later developments proved they had set it up in the wrong stream and the project was abandoned.

It is fun looking for gold whether any is found or not and I enjoyed myself hugely doing just that in the Andes years ago.

TO BE free—and far away!

I plan to buy a small sailboat and take off for all the places I always dreamed to see. I hope to work my way around the world in my own boat. Could you tell me on how I would go about doing such a thing? I plan to go to South America through the West Indies and then to South Africa, up the west coast, all around the Mediterranean, down the Suez, all around India through the South Sea Islands to the west coast of the U.S. and then home. Now, is it possible for me to do it in a few years from now? What would I do for work?

Yours truly,
James Randall.

Reply by Norman D. Ford: If you have the right temperament, $6,000, and a knowledge of seamanship, you should be able to

sail around the world. You'll need $5,000 of that $6,000 for a boat, though. It is possible to get a boat for less but if you want any comfort at all and assurance that the boat will ride out a gale of wind, that's the price you'll have to pay for a sound, well found craft.

Actually, I believe you would be able to get the boat for $4,000 but alterations to convert the average 30-foot ketch or yawl to an ocean cruiser would cost you in the region of the other $1,000. You'd be well advised to copper sheath the boat against teredo worms—then you'd need some real good passage-making sails, chain nips in the running gear, water tanks, some method of keeping GCT on board either by chronometer or radio, sea anchor and warp, charts, and a hundred and one other small items that would all run up the costs.

When buying your boat, have it surveyed by a competent yacht surveyor, tell him what you intend to do with it, and don't be tempted into buying it if he doesn't approve. The longer the boat is the better, for it will be faster. However, several people have crossed the Atlantic within the past year or two in yachts under 30 feet. If I were buying one, I'd try and get a double-ended gaff-rigged ketch, heavily rigged and sparred; she'd have to be a wholesome boat able to keep the seas in all weathers. I'd demand at least a 5-foot draft with a 30 foot length and she should carry at least half her ballast in a lead keel shoe.

You could take someone with you to share costs but I'd be pretty choosy who I took. Two or more people cooped up in a small yacht at sea for weeks on end can find lots of points to disagree on. If at all possible, I'd go alone. And I'd tend to keep my course westward around the world, for by the route you give, you'd be in the trades most of the time and they blow from the east on both sides of the equator, thus giving you a fair wind if you're bound to the west'ard.

You could probably find work in Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa if you applied for immigration entry to those countries before leaving the U.S. But work is uncertain as a means to pay for an ocean cruise and I'd sooner rely on having $1,000 in cash to pay my way around the world with. You could probably last out for 3 or 4 years on a $1,000 for your living expenses on a yacht are very very low. Best of luck.

WASHINGTON rock-hound.

Query: In the *Adventure Magazine* you are listed as an expert on precious stones. Could you give me some locations of gem material in the state of Washington. I am an amateur rock hound. I have been to Red Top & Crystal Mts. and the Dry Creek area, for Geodes and blue agate. I have

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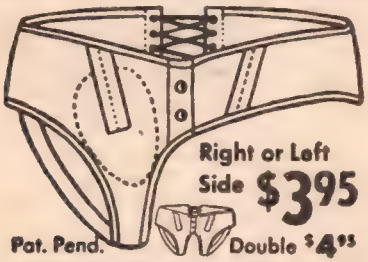

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also been in the Saddle Mt. area for petrified wood.

If you could pinpoint some other locations on the map I would appreciate it.

By gem material I mean any mineral or crystalline formation with color, and a hardness of (six) or better on Moh's scale. This would also include fire opal since I have heard there are deposits in the state.

L. E. Ince
Seattle, Wash.

Reply by Victor Shaw: Yes, I know about the geodes and blue agate in Crystal Mt. area in east-central Kittitas County. Also of the Saddle Mt. area crossing the Columbia in S. E. Kittitas Co. where there are opal and jasper besides the petrified wood. And I can point quite a few other areas for various minerals; although in many cases I can't "pinpoint" the exact spots, why local folks usually know where the mineral collectors find the gemstones or semi-precious stones and generally they are able to direct you to those areas.

First about fire opal: Maybe there's not much of this gem-stone in your state, for my lists show only two places for it—one is near Pullman, Whitman Co., the other is near Walla Walla, in W.W. Co. However, the fire type often occurs with common white opal. This occurs in the Saddle Mts; also in Moses Coulee near Douglas, and Farmer in central Douglas Co; and near Morton, near Storm King Mt. in central Lewis Co. also 15 miles south of Sultan, on the Skykomish River, in the southern part of Snobonmish Co; and a bit east of Yakima in Rattlesnake hills, in eastern Yakima County. Petrified wood there, too.

For the rest, there's jasper at Anacortes, Skagit Co., and very good agate on beaches of Bainbridge Id., Kitsap Co; rose quartz near Cashmere in south Chelan Co., on Wenache River; and in North West Lewis Co., there are bloodstone (jasper), carnelian (chalcedony), and good samples of petrified wood. Near Crescent Lake, Clallam Co., you find orbicular jasper, and various agate types; and there's good opal and petrified wood in Horse Heaven Hills, Benton Co. And you can get some good jade (nephrite) 6 miles east of Mt. Vernon, Skagit County.

In Ferry Co. near Republic, just about 15 miles east, there is good garnet and various types of chalcedony.

You can also get some fine carnelian, often of gem types, along the Salmon River gravels in Lewis County. And there's quite a lot of fine moss agate near Washougal, in southeast Clarke County.

The above covers all I have listed in your state, barring quite a lot of places having white opal, agates, jasper, and

petrified wood—especially in the Gingko State Forest, Kittitas County, which is famous for this rather prevalent mineral.

All the minerals above listed are fine cutting material, if that's what you are after. And, I suggest that you prospect some of the white opal areas in a hunt for the rarer fire opal mineral. You easily might discover some brand new sources of the lovely stuff.

Also I must mention two collectors in your state, one of whom is in your city. He is E. S. Bateman, 5108 West Olga, Seattle 6. The other is Charles O. Fernquist, Spokane, Wash. Mr. Bateman has a very comprehensive list of your state minerals and gemstones, in an article in *The Mineralogist* of Sept., '48. If you haven't seen this I suggest you send 25¢ for the back-copy To Editor H. C. Dake. at 329 S.E. 32nd Ave., Portland 15, Oregon. Bateman describes a lot about Red Top Mt., with a map showing how to get there from Cle Elum. And write to Mr. Fernquist if you like, but also get his list of fine Wash'n gems with localities in numerous areas; including also the place where some real diamonds occur in Skamania Co. Also an excellent fluorite is found in a vein in granite up on Jack Creek, some 4 miles from Keller, in Ferry County. He also lists amethyst 15 miles N.E. of Republic, in Ferry Co., with several other promising places.

And if you don't take *The Mineralogist* magazine, which I consider tops in this field and have contributed to a lot myself, you'll get lots of help by taking it at $2.00 a year.

If I can help further don't hesitate to write again *direct!*

Best of good luck to you.

HOW to train a husky.

Could you tell me about the Husky dogs—how trained and if they really are part wolf—in fact the life history of a Husky? Also if Paul Sutton's King in *Challenge of the Yukon* is a real husky and his history. Thanks for your courtesy.

Mrs. L. A. Janin
Odem, Texas.

Reply by Philip H. Godsell: During my many years in the Far North, before the coming of the airplane, we depended entirely on dogs for our transportation and raised them at all the leading trading posts. While these dogs may have had a wolf strain in them away back they have been developed through centuries of breeding into long-legged, broad-chested draught animals with a maximum of endurance, and even the best of them are not the kind you'd want to pamper or pet. Each trading post has a palisaded dogyard where the

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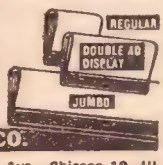

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dogs are kept when not working, usually chained up to prevent their tearing each other apart. The best dogs are bred with bitches specially kept for the purpose and the pups are fed well to make them rangy and big-boned.

At about nine months the pups are usually put into harness with other trained dogs until they get the feel of the collars and learn to pull their share. There are times when an entire young team will be made into a train, but usually an experienced lead dog is used with them for a while. Making a good lead-dog takes time and patience, as they have to learn the words of command: "Marche," to go forward: "Choc," to turn right; "Yiew," to turn left; "Woa," to stop, and so forth. Once the lead dog is properly trained he will go, turn left or right or stop at the word of command.

The second important dog is the wheel dog, nearest to the sleigh, whose job it is to keep the head of the toboggan on the trail, and tug it from left or right if it is inclined to swing too much to either side.

The driver runs behind the toboggan, and rarely rides, wearing snowshoes when the going is soft. In the Canadian North the dogs are hitched in single file on account of the narrow trails, and are attached to a toboggan 12 ft. long and 16 inches wide,

As an inspecting officer for the Hudson's Bay Company I used to travel about two thousand miles each winter with the same dogs, giving them a three-day rest at the different posts, which were about 200 miles apart. In the winter, from dawn to sunset, we would average about twenty-five miles a day, though in the spring, when there was a crust on the surface of the snow and snowshoes weren't needed, we would sometimes make a forty-mile day and on occasion even seventy-five miles. At night we would dig a hole in the snow with our snowshoes, carpet it with boughs from the spruce we cut down with our axes, then build a roaring ten foot fire along the front of the camp. As soon as the fish were thawed each dogdriver would take his place around the camp and toss a fish which would be caught on the fly by the dogs, and wolfed in about ten seconds, then another fish and they would curl up in the bush and go to sleep. In the morning we usually had to dig them out of some snowdrift they'd burrowed into when they heard us moving around. We usually got up about three A.M., thawed out our breakfast and hit the trail about 4 A.M., making another fire about ten or a little later, and traveling till the sun was just about sinking, leaving sufficient twilight to select and make camp.

A sleigh dog is old at ten, and rarely of much use afterwards.

I've never read the book you mention, but I assume it's probably written around the life history of one of these sleigh dogs.

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(Continued from page 91)

the-ankle denims, he looked exactly as he felt.

Lallie stormed away.

He hunched over the rail, evisioning in the shimmering sea the drabness of a bonded man's life.

Lallie returned with a benignly plump little gentleman. She introduced him.

"Mynheer Praediker, this is Matt Harlan, quite the stupidest man I know. Matt, this is the Reverend Schluyter, ship's chaplain." She laughed impudently up to his sombre face. "Since I am a modest daughter of a shopkeeper, he will tell you exactly what a prentice can do to shock his master's lordly ambitions out of him."

The Reverend Schluyter beamed upon Matt. "Yes, the lady hass told me." He spoke a much better English than the captain. "She hass told me zom off the things andt," he looked at Matt's bulk under the slashed shirt. "Andt yess, I can believe. So now, if we can borrow zom clothes, we perform the ceremony in the captain's cabin, yes? I go to make the arranges."

Matt stood and just looked at Lally. She laughed again to see the hardness slowly pass from his face; the moroseness and the bitterness, though not all of the worry.

"There'll be a mort o' trouble about this yet," he said.

Lally had no such cares. "I've seen you win through trouble such as smug Boston city never heard tell of."

Matt's don't-give-a-damn grin broke slowly out at last and at last he kissed her.

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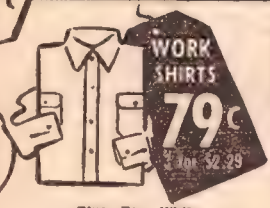

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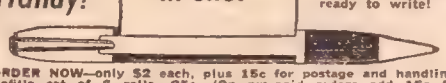

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NOTE: We offer this department to readers who wish to get in touch again with friends or acquaintances separated by years or chance. Give your own name and full address. Please notify *Adventure* immediately should you establish contact with the person you are seeking. Space permitting, each inquiry addressed to *Lost Trails* will be run in three consecutive issues. Requests by and concerning women are declined as not considered effective in a magazine published for men. *Adventure* also will decline any notice that may not seem a sincere effort to recover an old friendship, or that may not seem suitable to the editors for any other reason. No charge is made for publication of notices.

Would very much like to get any news concerning Arthur Carl, last heard of in Miami in 1922. He served with me in the English Machine Gun Corps during World War I in France. He left England after the War for the U.S.A. and was making good in Miami when suddenly all news from him stopped. Colonel G. Gauntlett, 18 Vine Road, East Molesey, Surrey, England.

Information wanted about Camerond Cox. Was in Rhyolite, Nevada in 1906. Write R. E. Ware, Clemson, S. C.

As a matter of interest I would like to hear from any one who knew Corporal Francis D. Howard, Company A. 109th Infantry. 28th Division. Killed in action July 16, 1918 at Chateau-Thiery. H. Thorne Arnold, 221 E. 46th St., New York 17, N. Y.

Sweeck, Joseph E., U.S. soldier, U.S. sailor. According to War Dept. Records was discharged from U.S.S. Denver on Pacific coast 1917. Gave us as his forwarding address, 255 Shelton Ave., New Haven, Conn. Never arrived. May be amnesia victim. A reward will be paid for proof of his existence or evidence of his death. Please write Tom E. Long, Box 203, Key West, Florida.

Would like to get in touch with Walter Norton, deep-sea diver on the battleship Arkansas in World War One. The family once lived in Springfield, Mass. Please notify Dawes Alward, Box 868, Waterford, N. Y.

I would like to make contact with an old friend in Los Trails. I would appreciate it if any one knowing the whereabouts of Dewey Kornegay would contact me. We were shipmates for three years on the cruiser U.S.S. Milwaukee during the war. The last I heard of him he was on the U.S.S. Montauck, in 1944. Contact Jack D. Mays GM3 USNR *266-13-82, U.S. Naval Hospital, Navy 961 Box 8, c/o F.P.O. San Francisco, California.

(Continued from page 10)

I was Navy Photographer for an Intelligence outfit during the late war. Worked for the Wichita Beacon as newsphotographer under nationally known Paul Threlfall. Born in Missouri and raised in Kansas. Took my Naval discharge in Hawaii after the war to run a charter fishing boat. Went promptly broke, so I went into the photographic business to go broke a second time. Crewed on a couple "pleasure" yachts for a while on inter-island "pleasure" trips. Formed a group of beachpickers for a pearling company that found three pearls worth in the neighborhood of three dollars. It rapidly became history. It was at Waikiki that I heard of Walter S. Campbell and Foster-Harris at the University of Oklahoma. Decided to come back to the mainland, so I bounced around the west coast for a year or so, finally migrating to Oklahoma. Under the patient teaching of Campbell and Harris, I managed to get started on full time fiction writing. In Oklahoma, I collected some old firearms, stories about lost mines, Indian-fighting army, a wife and now the family is in a family way. I suppose I'll keep writing, if I don't locate any lost Spanish mines. The southwestern United States is a gold mine of stories, anyway.

AND that, gentlemen, puts us to bed till another issue. Keep your ingots pithy—and *Camp-fire* will flare the brighter!

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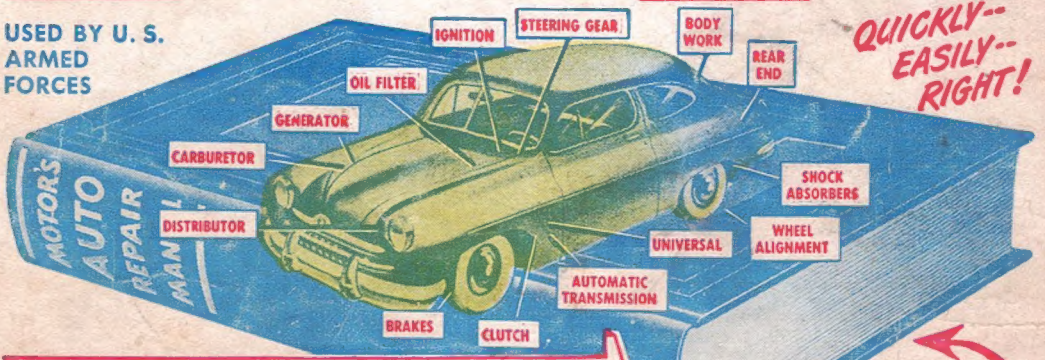

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